


KHUDIRAM BOSE

Revolutionary Extraordinaire

Hitendra Patel



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Introduction

The *Kesari*, a famous nationalist paper, commented on 26 May, 1908, less than a month after the Muzaffarpur bomb episode, '*Neither the Jubilee murder of 1897, nor the reported tampering with the Sikh regiments had produced so much commotion, and the English public opinion seems inclined to regard birth of the bomb in India as the most extraordinary event since the mutiny of 1857.*'

Going by the press reactions to the acts of Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki, two young men from rural Bengal, who threw the bomb with the intent of killing a hated British official, there must not be any doubt over the historical significance of the act. A historian has aptly observed that, '*the revolutionary movement first caught the attention of Indian people when Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki threw bomb on a British District Judge of Muzaffarpur.*'¹

The act of Khudiram and Prafulla symbolised a powerful physical threat on those who thought that the Indians could not use destructive violent path to fight against the foreign rulers. Their act acquired a different hue because those who had organised these plots were not ignorant or uneducated men. These revolutionaries were patriots who wanted the foreigners to leave this country and they were ready for any sacrifice for achieving this political objective. In many ways, they were linked with the contemporary political process as supporters of the extremist wing of Congress politics. But, in some ways, they also represented an uncompromising nationalist spirit which was close to any kind of negotiation with the foreign rulers. In this respect, they were like the rebels of 1857 who wanted to oust British by force and for whom it was a national as well as a religious duty to fight against the foreigners. Their religious

spirit was not parochial and it was never anti-Muslim. These revolutionaries did not get enough time and space for articulating their ideology but going by the history of following two decades, 1910s and 20s, it would be fair to say that these revolutionaries were true nationalists who wanted to free India by force and popular support. One should place the history of 1857 rebels, the revolutionaries of closing decade of nineteenth and opening decade of twentieth centuries, the Ghadar Party revolutionaries of 1910s and the Hindustan Republic Army of 1920s in continuum. It should not surprise anybody that the revolutionaries were the first educated people who appreciated the national spirit of the rebels of 1857 and the Ghadar Party was the first organisation to fully appreciate and propagate the revolt of 1857 as a national movement. It was logical on the part of the revolutionaries like Bhagat Singh and others to appreciate 1857. In 1930s the revolutionaries were very much part of the Congress led national movement and various leftist organisations' political initiatives and no sensible national leader or organisation could ever dare to condemn militant revolutionaries after that.

These revolutionaries have always been remembered by people of this country with great admiration but, sadly, the historians have not given adequate attention to the history of military revolutionary movement in India. Some books started appearing in 1960s and 70s which tried to prepare accounts of their activities and study their ideological orientations. Often, the lives of great revolutionaries are not available for consultation. It is true that preparing history of these revolutionaries is difficult as the sources- written by them or on them- are unavailable. The British official accounts, the main source of history writing even today, were recording their activities as activities of criminals, a source of threat to civic life of common people. In these accounts they were misguided youth who were trying to destabilize peace in society.

The revolutionaries were not misguided youths. To get an idea of what these revolutionaries aimed at Matilal Mukherjee, a pleader, in one of his speeches gives an idea of the aim of these revolutionaries

where he talked about three duties of a revolutionary and his understanding of colonial rule:

“Why are 4 men, who returned after learning the process of making instrument for crushing the Firingis, sitting idle? Let them do their work, the first of which is self defence, second killing Firingis, and the third- self government.... Where ever you see Firingis kill them at the cost of your lives and do not fear them. For the purpose of Self Government, we shall, on the fixed date, boycott Firingee courts and give up their slavery all at a time. We shall bring whole India under our full control just as we have municipalities under us. If the Firingees beg for anything they have it in the shape of alms. They would get nothing by force. Our Firingee king is a cheat. We have no faith in him. At the time of the Muhammedan Rule, this motherland was covered with gold.... Since Firingees have come to the land, we are dying for morsels of food. They are blood suckers and tyrants. They are enjoying all comforts by draining away our money while we are begging about for food.”²

Still, as these revolutionaries' memory serve as a great source of popular national expression of common Indians who hated foreign colonial masters, a comprehensive history of these revolutionaries—their activities and their ideological moorings, must be prepared. Some works have been done but those are mostly in Indian languages which have been prepared by non-experts who had neither orientation nor expertise to prepare historical accounts and analysis.

This book intends to portray, in brief, life history of one of the most famous militant revolutionary figures of India- Khudiram. There is not much to say about his life before he became a member of revolutionary organisation even while he was a school student. Still, some important pointers are available in some Bengali biographies of Khudiram, written by his near contemporaries and relatives, which give us the idea that he was a social worker, a fearless young boy and a swadeshi activist who wanted to drive the British out of his motherland by adhering to revolutionary path.

His daring act of throwing bomb to kill an English officer in 1908 made him immortal as the symbol of militant revolutionary

movement. This act's historical significance can be appreciated only if we place this act in its historical context. It is necessary not only to know the history of the two exceptional youngmen-Khudiram and Prafulla Chaki, who decided to kill a British official in a most daring fashion. The way they behaved: one preferred to commit suicide to be arrested and the other carried himself in a most heroic way without any concern for his life, went a long way in demonstrating that these young men were not mere "terrorist", as they were referred in those days, but nation loving young men. As a student of history, perhaps, more important task before us is to relate this daring act with the ongoing revolutionary movements which started with a clear understanding of uncompromising nationalism in the late years of nineteenth century and continued well into 1920s when Bismil, Bhagat Singh and Azad gave it a well formulated ideological and organisational base.

As already mentioned, in many ways there was a continuum in the revolt of 1857, the revolutionary movements of early twentieth century of Maharashtra and Bengal and the revolutionary activities of the Punjab, Maharashtra, Bengal, the United Provinces, and other states in the 1920s. This tradition of uncompromising nationalism did not believe in any negotiation with the foreigners for independence. Rather, they were convinced, the foreigners were to be ousted by force to regain the independence of this great country.

Some historians have tried to argue that this militant nationalism was ideologically linked with the emerging new Hindu ideology in the nineteenth century which sought to take inspiration from European militant nationalism and the new Hinduism of Dayanand Saraswati, Bankimchandra and Vivekananda. This new Hinduism, articulated by Tilak in Maharashtra and Aurobindo in Bengal gave a full fledged ideology of militant nationalism in the 1890s. According to this view, the militant national ideology ignored internal weaknesses of Indian society and sought to believe that the main problem of this society was the foreign rule. In this view, the early exposition of this new ideology could be found in Aurobindo's 'New Lamps for Old'³ and Tilak's efforts of organising Ganeshotsav and Shivaji Utsav from 1893 onwards. It is argued that the 1890s and early

1890s witnessed a gradual and decisive shift towards new Hinduism. On the basis of the readings of Lala Lajpat Rai, Aurobindo Ghosh and others, Amalesh Tripathi has argued that these new leaders of India had finally accepted the need to use Hinduism for nationalist mobilization. These interpretations should be linked with the history of Sabha- Samiti and secret organisations in Bengal. We do not have very detailed accounts of these secret societies so far. Still, on the basis of whatever information available to us, we can say that these secret societies had a very important role in the first decade of twentieth century Bengal. Judging from this perspective it can be said that these revolutionaries' love for their religion was closely linked with their love for motherland. It was not associated with any hostility to adherents of other faiths.

With some honourable exceptions⁴ historians did not pay much attention to the ideological dimensions of this revolutionary movement till Amalesh Tripathi's *The Extremist Challenge* was published in 1967. But, this book's scope was not to go into the history of revolutionary movement. In that sense, in 1970, Ramesh Chandra Majumdar was the first major historian of Indian history who gave this subject a serious attention.⁵ It was imperative to know, in details, as far as possible, the activities and ideas of revolutionaries who represented militant tradition of Indian nationalism which believed that Indians must come together and pull their strengths together to oust the foreign rulers by force. At least, since the days of Partition of Bengal movement days, the militants had been consistently advocating the use of force to achieve independence. *Jugantar*, an important paper of Bengal, categorically summed up this in its editorial on 22 April, 1906 in which it was maintained that the solution lied with the people themselves. It said that the thirty crore people's sixty crore hands must be raised to counter the oppression of the government. A force could be countered only by force.⁶ From roughly 1870s a shift in the "universe of discourse and action of the intelligentsia towards various forms of nationalism" is widely accepted among the historians. In historical literature, however, the varieties of nationalism do not get adequate attention. It is commonly understood that the revolutionary militant movement

(which is still called terrorism) was a post partition (of Bengal) development. The accepted version is that partition gave national politics a push towards extremism. Attempts have been made to see the ideological links of post partition “terrorist” acts with Hindu revivalist ideology which had inspired hundreds of youths to take arms to oust the foreigners by using violent means. Very rarely these nationalists have been taken as representatives of an alternative uncompromising nationalism which had consistently opposed the British rule. It is significant that these militants were the first to attach great importance to the revolt of 1857 as a war of independence. In the other variety of nationalism, led by the Congress, the revolt was considered a national movement decades later. This revolutionary militant movement can also be seen as a precursor of a more mature and modern revolutionary movement of 1920s which produced Bismil, Bhagat Singh, Azad and others. The obvious disadvantage of these militant revolutionary efforts was that it never got the organisational support. In the colonial context, these militants were not only facing a hostile and powerful colonial power but also a liberal educated middle class which had been critical to the use of violent means for national ends. In this context, the militants had been misunderstood by people also. One of the major concerns of militants had been to prove that they were not blood thirsty people and they had been using violent means only against a power which could not be fought with passive resistance means and so on. We find many instances when the desperate militants coming out to show that their efforts were not against the Congress rather, they were supplementing the Congress. In one case a young man goes to Nehru to seek his guidance about what to do only to get advice that he must leave whatever he and his associates were doing! The desperate young man was Azad! It is documented historically that the middle class nationalism did not treat militants as nationalists at least till Bhagat Singh’s execution case highlighted the maturity of their political understanding of the militants.

Unlike the militants of 1920s the militants of Bengal of post partition days have found sympathy and admiration of their Bengali

people. Khudiram Bose represents the spirit of militancy of Bengal which had remained in public memory ever since the news of his execution reached Bengal. Khudiram Bose should be considered a true icon of Bengal of revolutionary movement days. Songs have been written inspired by the story of his taking permission from his mother to take leave (for serving his motherland) the most notable being *Ek bar bidai de ma ghure aashi*. A historian has rightly noted that in Bengal “a street beggar’s lament for Khudiram, could still be heard in Bengal decades after his execution.”

Khudiram Bose lived a very short life and not many authentic accounts are available to historians to say much about this remarkable young man. One can fill many pages on his impact on Indian national movement in general and Bengal presidency in particular but, perhaps it is more important to see the moment of Khudiram’s hurling of bomb as a signifying moment to reconstruct the history of extremist wing of Indian nationalism. The details of Khudiram Bose’s life should be researched as much as possible but two most important areas of research related to him should be the extremist movement before him and Khudiram as a symbol of militant nationalism.

This book aims to engage general readers who may not be well versed with the details of militant movement of late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For their convenience there is a discussion on the background in which young revolutionary like Khudiram could emerge and make such powerful impact. While collecting material for this book it came as a pleasant surprise that Khudiram was a very committed social activist and a champion of swadeshi.

NOTES

1. Amallesh Tripathi, *Swatantrata Sangram*, in Bipan Chandra, Amallesh Tripathi and Barun De (eds.), New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1972, p.94. In the annals of revolutionary movement also this is marked as “the beginning” (*Biplav Vadiyon ke Itihas ka shri ganesh*) by Sharada Prasad Bhandari in one of the earliest writings in appreciation of Khudiram Bose in Hindi literature. (See Sharada Prasadji Bhandari, ‘Khudiram’, *Chand: Phansi Ank*, 1928, Allahabad).

2. Extract from the report of Mazhurul Huq, Deputy Suptd of Police, Midnapore, dated 1/6/08. (see Midnapore Conspiracy Case, Intelligence Branch, 16/1908, Bengal State Archives, p. 21). It is added in this report that many other speakers made similar speeches. After these speeches, it was proposed to raise by subscription Rs 1000 to Rs 1200 wanted for preparing instrument for the purpose of killing Firingees!
3. This was published in 1893-94 in Indu Prakash. Sumit Sarkar has also supported that this new thinking started with these articles.
4. One should mention with appreciation a massive volume on the history of militant movement – *The Roll of Honour*, published in 1965 which was based on contemporary records available.
5. See his introduction of Bhupendra Kishore Rakshit Ray, *Bharate Sashastra Biplab* (Bengali) (Calcutta: Ravindra Library, Bangabd 1377), p. 1. Majumdar lamented that “till this day no proper history of militant revolutionary movement has been written.”
6. Cited in Amalesh Tripathi, *Op. cit.*, p.92.

Revolutionary Movement in Bengal before Khudiram

In India, the British rule had never been liked by the majority. As early as mid nineteenth century a British official had noted that majority of Indians hate their colonial masters and there were only a few educated people who appreciated the worth of the presence of a liberal and modern British rule in India. The nationalism in India progressed along two axes-one giving expression to majority's sentiments while the other looked constructively towards the British rule as an opportunity to progress the way the Britishers had progressed. Quite clearly the revolt of 1857 and the revolutionaries of Maharashtra, Bengal and the Punjab fall in the first category while more enlightened people took a more cautious, reasonable, liberal approach to the British rule by negotiating with the government through associational politics, journalistic writings and liberal Congress activities. In Maharashtra, largely due to chain of events linking Chapekar brothers, Basudev Balvant Phadke and Tilak, majority Indians' nationalism became the dominant nationalism. This brand of nationalism had been more powerful and more appealing among the young people of whole India wherever this managed to reach out. The appeal for Tilak remained very powerful till Mahatma Gandhi arrived in Indian politics which altered its nature by making the Congress ready for mass mobilisation. But, till Gandhi stepped in the most powerful popular leaders of India had been Tilak in Maharashtra, Bipin Chandra Pal in Bengal and Lala Lajpat Rai in the Punjab.

The moderate, liberal Congressmen preferred to remain in negotiating terms with the British. Dadabhai Naoroji, Surendra Nath

Banerjee, Mahadev Govind Ranade and Gopal Krishna Gokhale were all great leaders and visionaries. Their contribution in the making of economic nationalist ideology can not be questioned.¹ But, their nationalism was of a different variety. They could not appreciate the spirit behind the revolt of 1857 and the militant revolutionaries of late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

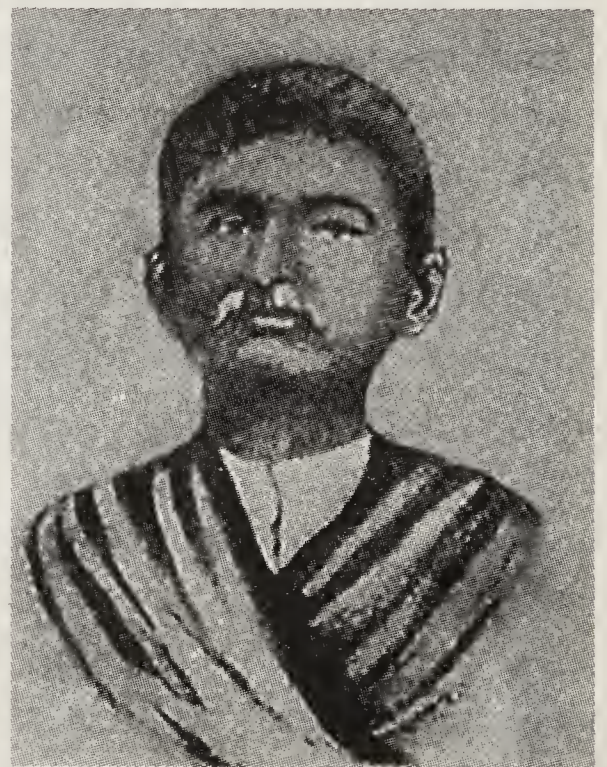
This made the revolutionaries to become nationalists with a difference. They were convinced that freedom could not be won by petitions, appeals and negotiations. So, they were ready to do anything which could ensure the overthrow of foreign British rule. They were inspired by the revolutionaries of Europe and they followed developments of Europe and elsewhere. The cult of revolutionary terrorism, as it was called then, inspired them. But, it would be wrong to assume that these revolutionaries were merely overenthusiastic youths who had no idea of the strength of the colonial state. The activities of these revolutionaries should be understood in the context of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Indian society which had witnessed structural changes in it. The invasion of colonial modern ideas and institutions has generated a mixed response in Indian society. On the one hand, it made the educated Indians realise that times had changed and new skills and approaches were required in this changed situation. The opening of schools, colleges, popularisation of print media in Indian languages, some half hearted efforts of “reforming” Indian society and other changes had made a new class- modern intelligentsia new social leaders. But, this intelligentsia was also not a homogeneous category. In Bengal, Maharashtra and the Punjab reform movements had created a kind of tension among the Hindus. The reform movement of Arya Samaj can be seen directly linked with the growth of a brand of nationalism which attached importance to *swaraj* (self rule), *swadesh* (own country). In Bengal, the reform movements had helped in an environment in which people realised the importance of organisation and strengthening of community feelings among the people. Indian culture, tradition, history, religion etc. were becoming subjects of discussion among the intelligentsia and we find a fairly large volume of writings on these subjects in newspapers and

books of this period. A noted historian Amalesh Tripathi has shown the links between the Hindu revivalist movements with the revolutionary movement of Bengal. In this view, Vivekananda was not merely a spiritual leader but a national leader who inspired selfless service for the countrymen as an ideal. In this situation the writings of Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, a government official, acquired a different character in which the protagonists were fighting not for themselves but for their ideals- service of the nation. This was the birth of nationalism in India.²

It is not possible to discuss the birth of nationalism in India in details here. But, a crucial issue of debate on the birth of nationalism is required to put things in perspective. Nationalism in its modern form came into existence in Europe after French revolutionary years in the closing decade of nineteenth century. Later, in the Napoleonic war days and thereafter it developed its appeal among young people of Europe as an ideology and uniting force to fight against foreign invasion or domination. Mazzini, the great Italian revolutionary, was the father of modern nationalism in the sense that it articulated the sentiments of people to get the freedom of their motherland. As every nation should have a state naturally, it was claimed that the force which deny the claim of a nation to get a sovereign state was the enemy force. This nationalism inspired all countrymen to fight against the enemy state by violent means to claim their nation's freedom. This brand of nationalism was a leftist ideology as it expressed the desire of people to claim, what they considered as a nation, legitimate and natural right. This was the phase of liberal nationalism. In the second half of nineteenth century, after the success of national unification movements- Italian and German- the nature of nationalism got changed. Hobsbawm and other historians have argued that, in the second half of the nineteenth century, particularly after 1870s nationalism was appropriated by powerful European states as the ideology of the state. In this phase, however, nationalists considered it their duty to help other nationalists fighting for their national independence. This explains why Garibaldi was ready to help an Indian rebel Ajimullah Khan in 1857.³

In the second half of nineteenth century more and more national movements began in different parts of globe which were using violent means to get the political objective. As the supremacy of European powers all over world was an accepted truth the nationalist revolutionaries took great pride in the defeat of an European power- Russia in the hands of an Asian power- Japan. All these jelled well with the growing discontent against the British in India. The reform movements, rise of modern literature which was evoking glorious past of the nation for the readers, the growth of intelligentsia etc. were supportive of this new ideology of nationalism.

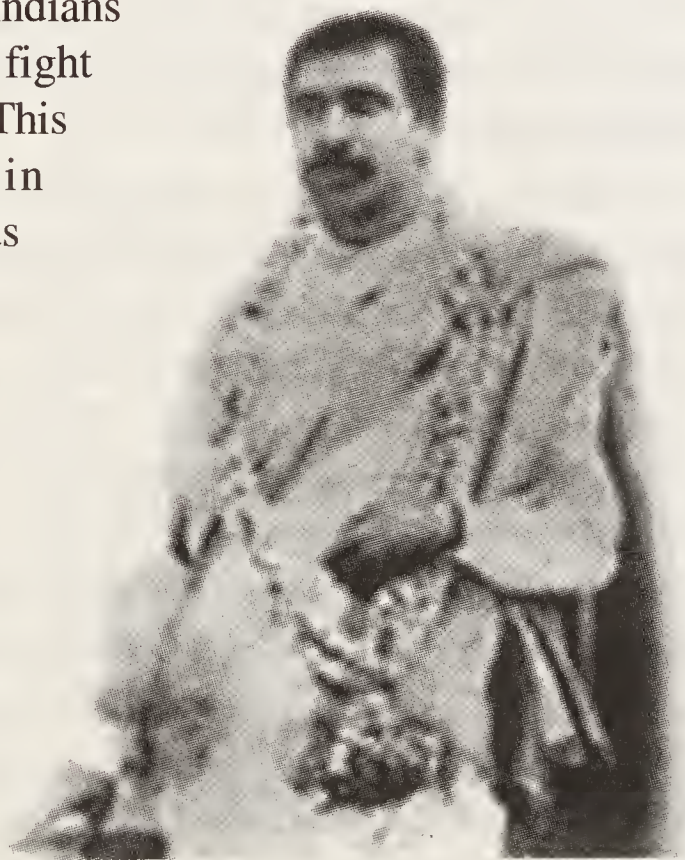
Bengal was on the forefront in realising the importance of this new ideology. Here, the intelligentsia's views on nationalism had been more pronounced since, at least, 1870s. Early manifestation of national consciousness in Bengal can be traced to establishment and celebration of the *Hindu Mela*, an annual festival, the main planks of which were *Swadeshi*, more use of Indian languages and fostering a unitary image of India. The leaders involved with these activities



Rajnarayan Bose(left) and Nabagopal Mitra(right): Prominent figures of Hindu Mela, the annual festival celebrated to foster unity of India

had also promoted the idea of “imparting physical education involving exercises for building up of discipline and manhood of the nation with a view to fighting British imperialism and colonialism.”⁴ One can find many linkages between these trends with those of late day revolutionary activities. Niharranjan Ray has rightly observed that “Aurobindo Ghosh, Barindrakumar Ghosh and Satyendranath Bose who figured so prominently in the history of militant nationalism of the first decade of the 20th century, were all lineal descendants of the great Rajnarayan (Bose, who along with Nabagopal Mitra were two leading figures of the *Hindu Mela* movement), either by the paternal or maternal side.”⁵ Rajnarayan Bose was sensitive to the humiliation and degradation of Indians brought about by the British policy and administration. “He advocated, among other things, the need for forming secret societies committed by oath to use of force, wherever and whenever necessary, to break the backbone of the ruling authorities.”⁶ His efforts proved effective and “Calcutta student community was ...honey combed with secret organisations.”⁷

Ever since 1857 for many Indians there was a burning desire to fight against the foreign British rule. This sentiment was expressed in various ways in various parts of this country. The revolutionary tradition made early impact in Maharashtra and its early known exponents were Chapekar brothers. The growing sympathy for these revolutionaries among the common people made great leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak to write favourably about them in



Aurobindo Ghosh in 1908: Frontline extremist leader and the role model of young revolutionaries

newspapers. Aurobindo Ghosh carried these revolutionary ideas from Baroda to Calcutta. "What Aurobindo did to build up the Swadeshi and Boycott movements and to secret revolutionary organisations in Bengal by linking up the latter with those of Maharashtra and elsewhere."⁸ Barindrakumar Ghosh had later said that, after stopping at Baroda, with his brother Aurobindo, he came to the idea of preaching independence. About Aurobindo it was said that he came into contact with one Thakur Sahib, a member of a secret society which is said to have existed from the days of 1857 revolt days. Under this influence he began to deliberate on the idea of national freedom and unity, and to create schemes for the liberation of India. With this purpose in view he formulated the *Bhabani Mandir*, an all India religious movement, and embodied his ideas in a pamphlet.⁹

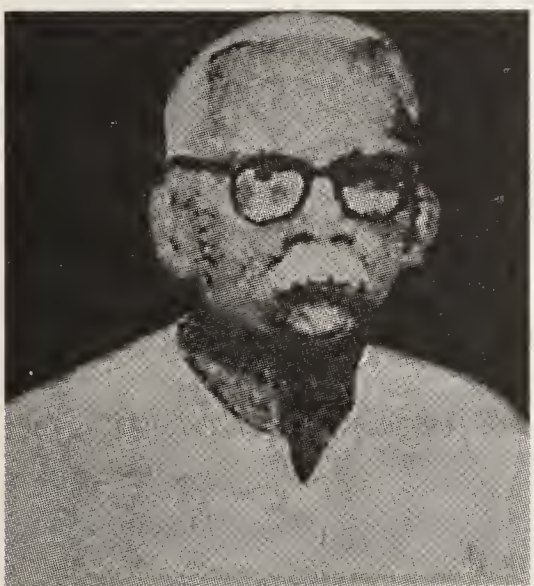
Niharranjan Ray has argued that "since (the *Hindu Mela* days) more particularly during the 1880s and the decade that followed, young Bengal was being ceaselessly fed and nourished by a literature the very stuff of which was made up of the emotions and sentiments of love for the motherland on the one hand and on the other, of aspirations and yearnings for freedom from the bondage of the foreign political power."¹⁰

On the other hand, in Bengal, the years between 1895 and 1908 also witnessed new kind of powerful writings of Rabindranath, Dwijendralal, Atul Prasad, Girish Chandra and Rajanikanta which highlighted the glory of this country in the past and made Bengalis more conscious of their loss of glory. It was an age of popular poets like Mukund Das and others who popularised the ideals of patriotism among the Bengalis through their songs, *Jatra* (street theatres). During these years newspapers (like *Hindu Patriot*, *Amrit Bazar*, *Bengalee*) run by Indians had also rendered great services to the spread of national ideas. These ideas reached to more people with the publications of popular Bengali newspapers like *Jugantar*, *Bande Mataram*, *Sandhya*, *Karma Yogi*, *Naba Shakti*. Due to these papers the stories of revolutionaries of Maharashtra like Chapekar brothers, Binayak Ranade were quite well known in Bengal. Aurobindo's coming to Calcutta from Baroda came at a crucial time

when more and more people, specially young, were eager to join anti-British organisations.

According to Sumit Sarkar the first revolutionary groups was set up around 1902 in Midnapore (by Jnanendranath Basu) and Calcutta (the Anushilan Samiti, founded by Promotha Mitter and Aurobindo's emissaries from Baroda, Jatindranath Banerjee and Barindrakumar Ghosh), but their activities had been confined initially

to physical and moral training of members.¹¹ To him, these organisations were not significant till 1907 or 1908. His view is similar to the views of Police on these secret societies. One report mentioned - "Initially these secret societies had no plan of direct action; they had no revolutionary motive. They aimed at ideological and physical training, their thought and imagination alone were of a revolutionary character."¹² Some other scholars have also maintained that the revolutionary ideas had made big impact in Bengal at least by 1901-02.¹³ The government report prepared later also traced the origin of revolutionary movement to 1900 when P. Mitter, Saralabala and others started it. In 1901 Jatindra Banerjee joined. Barindra Ghosh and Satish Bose joined in 1902.¹⁴



Promotha Mitter(top) and Barindrakumar Ghosh (above): Founders of Anushilan Samiti

From 1902 onwards, there are enough historical evidences that the secret societies had been coming into contact with each other for better revolutionary

organisational coordination. Anushilan Samiti's P. Mitter came in personal contact with Jatindranath Bandopadhyay who was a representative of Aurobindo Ghosh. Some students of General Assemblies Institution were members of this revolutionary organisation. They had been inspired by the writings of Bankimchandra, Vivekananda and Jogendrachandra Vidyabhushan (the author of several books on Mazzini and Garibaldi).¹⁵ In the same year, Aurobindo gave *deeksha* (oath) of revolutionary *mantra* to Hemchandra Kanungo, Satyen Basu and some youths of Medinipur.¹⁶ Throughout the next year, Sakham Ganesh Deuskar, P. Mitra and Jatindra Nath Bandopadhyay taught lessons of revolutionary activism to youths of Bengal. Around this time, Barindra Kumar Ghosh, younger brother of Aurobindo joined Anushilan Samiti.

In 1904, Aurobindo Ghosh came to Bengal and he realised that militant nationalism needed popular support to make it a national revolution. He tried to develop coordination among different organisations who had been active independently in different regions. In 1905 Aurobindo wrote *Bhabani Mandir* in which the influence of Bankimchandra's nationalism was pronounced. In this book we can discern clearly how Aurobindo had come close not only to Bankim but also to Nivedita's *Kali: the Mother*, and Tilak's 'Shivaji-Utsav'.¹⁷ There can not be any doubt that by now the militant nationalism had become a full fledged ideology which promoted a blend of European militant nationalism and a kind of cultural nationalism inspired by Dayanand, Bankimchandra, Vivekananda, Tilak, Aurobindo and others.¹⁸ Now onwards Aurobindo had been the leader of this militant nationalist movement of Bengal till he was imprisoned and transformed after his jail sentence.

The coming of Aurobindo as the leader of militant revolutionary movement was in a way very significant. He came from a family who had supported the use of violence as a legitimate weapon to fight for nationalist cause. Rajnarayan Bose, the maternal grandfather of Aurobindo, is said to have boasted that the British Government would not recognise Bengal until some of its officers were bombed as systematic campaign based on the latest scientific method.¹⁹

The advent of militant nationalist ideology had influenced the thinking of so many educated people around that time that even in meetings on spiritual discourses scholars found it necessary to refer to anarchists and righteous distribution of social wealth. In September 1904, Sakharam Ganesh Deoskar, a famous Maharashtrian who edited a Bengali paper of Calcutta gave lectures on 'Spirituality-a necessary condition of national prosperity', under the auspices of Theosophy Federation in which he said that the unrighteous distribution of wealth was mainly responsible for most of the evils in the society. It lay at the root of anarchism also. He said, further, "Look at the acts of the anarchists. Aristocrats are sought to be removed from the way by dynamite and violent means. What is the reason? It is the result of unrighteous distribution of wealth. A poor man looks at rich man and mutters 'this is my enemy'. He gets out his revolver and tries to shoot him."²⁰

Partition of Bengal

The partition of Bengal came as a big boost for the revolutionary movement in Bengal. It charged the political environment of entire country. For all those who had made attempts to arouse national sentiments among people this provided an opportunity of making people aware how the foreign rule had been insensitive to the public opinion and sentiment. Aurobindo Ghosh regarded the partition of Bengal as "the greatest blessing that had ever happened in India. No other measure could have stirred national feeling so deeply or roused it so suddenly from lethargy of previous years."²¹ There can not be any doubt that the partition movement helped in creating an environment in which anti British feelings gained ground. Among those days Bankimchandra's *Ananda Math*, Aurobindo's *Bhabani Mandir*, *Bartaman Rana-niti* and a booklet *Mukti Kon Pathe* were very widely read and discussed among the Bengalis. With these, some secret literature in the form of books directly preaching revolutionary ideas also got into circulation.²²

Any scrutiny of newspaper writings, reports on speeches of the leaders in different meetings can give the idea how the partition

movement had changed the mood of people of Bengal. Some reports

*“How can a man die better than
facing fearful odds
For the ashes of his father
and the temple of his gods”*

The same paper wrote in March, 1907: “Are not ten thousand sons of Bengal prepared to embrace death to avenge the humiliation of their fatherland?”

It added further, “The number of Englishmen in the entire country is not more than a lakh and a half. And what is the number of English officials in each district? With a firm resolve you can bring the English rule to an end in a single day. The time has come to make the Englishmen understand that enjoying the assets of domination in another country after wrongfully taking possession of it, will not be permitted to continue for ever. Let him now realise full well that the life of a thief who steals others’ properties is no longer an easy one in this country.”

In the same issue the paper advanced programme for collection of funds for this which included taking money by force from the community for revolution, looting Government property (there is no offence in looting for defraying expenses of establishing a future sovereign state) and imposition of taxes whenever control over any area become possible.²³

Sandhya reported with satisfaction in May, 1907 : “People are soundly thrashing a *feringhi* whenever they are coming across one. And here whenever a *feringhi* is seen the boys throw a brickbat at him. And the thrashing of European soldiers is continuing. The *feringhis* are also being thrashed. So to what pass they have come? These *feringhis* who used to walk defiantly through the heart of the city are today alarmed. They all carry pistols in their pockets and generally avoid the native quarters of the city.”

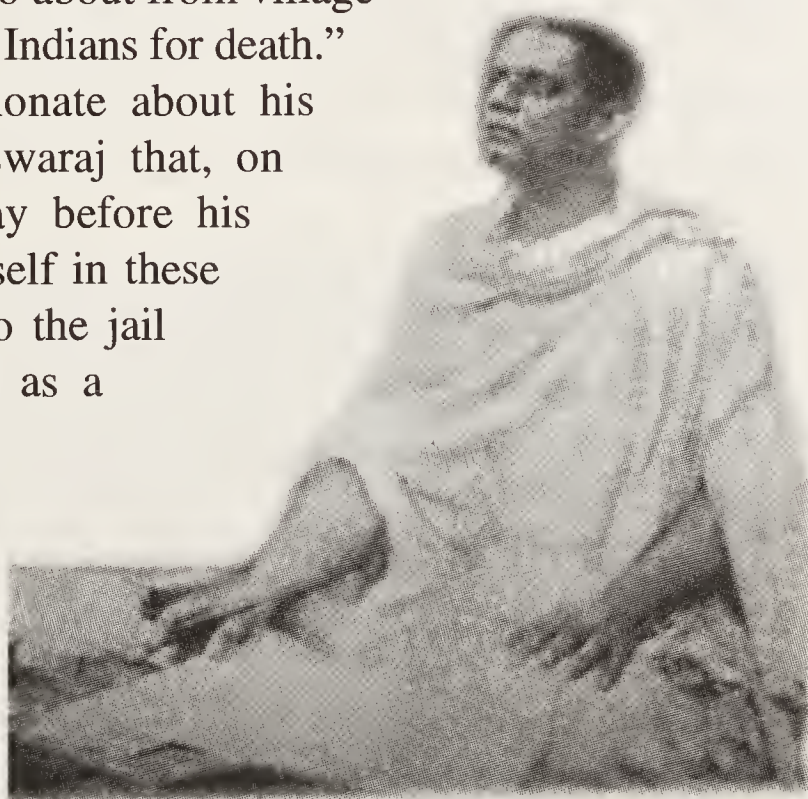
Sandhya did not hesitate to ask- “How long will you tolerate

oppression lying down? And why? Will you learn to give blows for blows?"²⁴

In September 1907, *Sandhya* wrote: "God gives opportunities to all nations to free themselves from their stupor and strength to make the necessary beginning." In October, 1907, this paper was even more directly favouring the ideology of militancy- "Meetings are of no use nowadays. It therefore, ought to be borne in mind that all fear of jail and love of life should be banished from the heart. And as we ourselves shall commit no oppression, we should not allow others to commit any oppression. If the red faced police or the soldiers from the fort come to oppress us , we must let them off with some of the limbs chopped off."

In a meeting at Kalighat in October, 1907, a speaker said- "Let the motto now be: Blow for a blow, eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth." *Sandhya* under its bold editor Brahmamadhab Upadhyay was equally aggressive. This paper, as its motto wrote in March 1907: "If death comes in the striving, the death will be converted to immortality." In May it wrote: "Listen and you will hear the Mother's trumpet sounding. Mother's sons do not tarry, but get ready; go about from village to village and prepare the Indians for death."

Upadhyay was so passionate about his duties as a writer for swaraj that, on October 26, 1907, a day before his death, he expressed himself in these words: " I will not go to the jail of the *feringhi* to work as a prisoner. I had never been at any one's back and call. I obeyed none. At the fag end of my old age they will send me to jail for law's sake, and I will work for nothing!



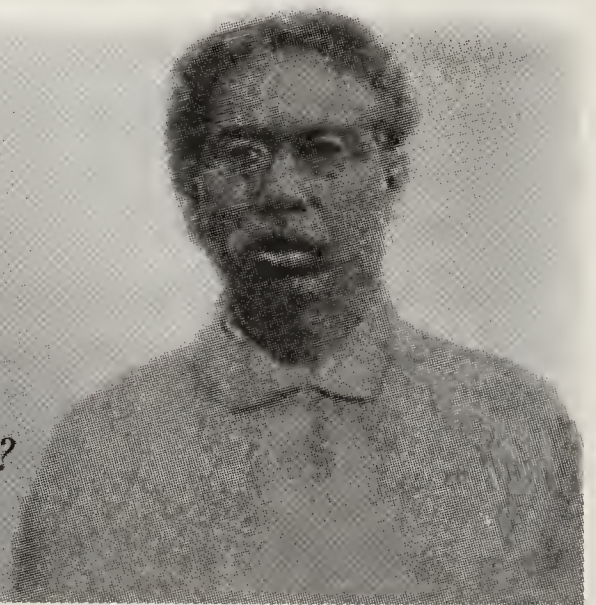
Brahmamadhab Upadhyay: Firebrand editor of 'Sandhya'

Impossible! I won't go to jail; I have been called."²⁵

A case against *Bande Mataram*, summed up the mood of Bengali revolutionary leaders and their sympathisers. A charge was made against this widely read paper for publishing seditious editorial. Bipin Chandra Pal who was associated with the editorial team of this paper was summoned by the court. He came and gave this statement: "I have conscientious objection against taking part in a prosecution which I believe to be unjust and injurious to the cause of popular freedom and the interests of public. I have objection to swear in these proceedings. I refuse to answer any question in connection with this case."

The government could no longer ignore this kind of display of arrogance. Long before Gandhi's entry in Indian politics this marked the earliest example of passive resistance form of protest. For this, Bipin Chandra Pal was handed over two month's imprisonment which made him a great hero of common people. Thousands of people gathered to show their support for Pal and they had to be lathicharged and mercilessly beaten for their show of solidarity for their leader on 26 August 1907. On that day a 15 year old student of National School, Sushil Sen could not tolerate the high handedness of the Police Sergeant and he hit him. He was ordered to be flogged 15 times for this.²⁶ A song composed at that time to sum up the mood of people revealed little care for the government:

*Jabe jabe jiban chale
Jagat majhe tomar kaje
'Bande Mataram' bole
Bet mere ki ma bholabi
Amra ki mayer sei chhele?*



Bipin Chandra Pal: Leading nationalist, imprisoned for his explosive write ups in 'Bande Mataram'

The anger for punishing Bipin Chandra Pal did not die easily. Soon revolutionary leaders started planning to punish all those who had handed over the punishment to him. Presidency Magistrate Kingsford who had ordered the punishment to Pal and Sushil Sen was the prime target. His insensitivity toward the arguments of nationalists and his arrogance in questioning the accused were interpreted as his sadism. Soon, Kingsford was known as an official who took pride in inflicting severest punishment to revolutionaries.

The revolutionaries ran a court to make their own judgements. In the court of revolutionaries Kingsford was given the punishment of death. This revolutionary decision was taken by the trio of Aurobindo, Charu Datta and Subodh Mallick.²⁷ A Bomb-Book was sent to Kingsford but this attempt of killing him proved futile as he did not come to his office. Sedition Committee Report of 1918 said : “ ... a parcel was found which Mr. Kingsford had received but not opened, thinking that it contained a book borrowed from him. The parcel did not contain a book; but the middle portion of the leaves had been cut away and the volume was thus in effect a spring to cause its explosion if book was opened.”²⁸

The government officials had sensed that Kingsford's life was in danger and as a precautionary measure he was sent to Muzaffarpur, Bihar. The sudden transfer order made it very difficult for the revolutionaries to make any attempt on Kingsford's life. But, they decided not to leave this resolution unfulfilled. The task of getting this hated man killed fell on two young boys – Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki. The story of their daring expedition would be taken up separately in the next chapter. Here, the background which handed over the job of killing this well known enemy of the revolutionaries should be discussed in greater details. This is imperative to understand the mindset of revolutionaries of post Partition Bengal days and spirit behind their brand of nationalism. The Indian National Congress and its leaders of both Moderate and Extremist varieties were there even then but these revolutionaries were convinced that the struggle for freedom must not be negotiated

with the enemy. For them, it was a war between two nations. A revolutionary's reflection on the death of innocent Kennedys when Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki threw bomb believing them to be Kingsford's is worth noticing. He said that there was nothing personal in it. It was a war declared by a nation against the enemy nation. Indian nation had declared war against the British nation as the latter had usurped their freedom; reduced Indians to slaves. This war was to continue for years to come. This event of 1908 was a signal for many more to come. In this war many mothers, sisters, wives were to lose their beloved ones. Many innocents would die in this war. Thinking from individual's perspective these actions might seem unjust but thinking in the national perspective these actions were selfless great acts of a nation loving patriot.²⁹

NOTES

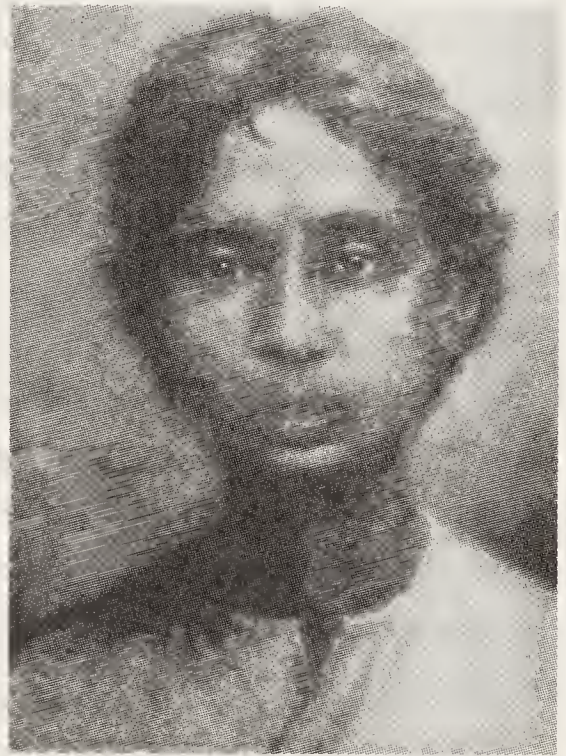
1. For a classic survey of their contribution to Indian nationalism see two very influential studies which still remain very useful references for any one willing to understand how the Indian intelligentsia had changed ideologically since mid 19th century to 1905 and after. See S.R. Mehrotra, *The Emergence of the Indian National Congress*, New Delhi, 1971 and Bipan Chandra, *The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India*, New Delhi, 1966.
2. For an illuminating study of Bankimchandra's immortal song - 'Bande Mataram' and its impact see Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, *Vande Mataram: The Biography of a Song*, New Delhi, 2003.
3. This help could not come as by the time it was ready the revolt had been suppressed.
4. Niharranjan Ray, 'From Cultural to Military Nationalism: The Emergence of the Anushilan Samiti', in Tridib Chaudhuri (ed.), *Freedom Struggle and Anushilan Samiti* Vol 1, Calcutta: Anushilan Samiti, 1979, p. 6.
5. *Ibid*, p. 7.
6. *Ibid*, p.7.
7. Bipin Chandra Pal, cited in Niharranjan Ray, *Ibid*, p. 7. Nihar Ranjan Ray has forcefully argued that these activities and trends "led eventually to provide the ideology which went to feed and nourish the extremist militant nationalism of men like Aurobindo and Tilak and of the revolutionary organizations of later day like Anushilan and Yugantar in Bengal and similar organizations in Maharashtra and still later, in the Punjab". (see Niharranjan Ray, *Ibid*, p. 8.

8. *Ibid*, p. 11.
9. J. C. Nixon (Compiled), *An Account of the Revolutionary Organisation in Bengal other than the Dacca Anushilan Samiti*, Calcutta, Bengal Secretariat Press, p. 3.
10. Niharranjan Ray, *Ibid*, p.14.
11. Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India* ,Delhi, Macmillan, 1984, p.123
12. F. C. Daly, *First Rebels: Strictly Confidential Note On The Growth Of The Revolutionary Movement In Bengal*, Sankar Ghosh ,Calcutta, Riddhi-India, 1981[1911]), p. XIV.
13. Bhupendra Kishore Rakshit Ray, *Bharate Sashastra Biplab* (Bengali), Calcutta, Ravindra Library, Bangabd 1377, p.3.
14. See J. C. Nixon, *Op. Cit.*, p. 17.
15. Amalesh Tripathi, *Bharater Mukti Sangrame Charampanthi Parva* Calcutta: Ananda Publishers Private Limited, 1991, p. 72.
16. *Ibid*.
17. Amalesh Tripathi persuasively argues that till this point the overt influence of Hinduism was not there in Aurobindo.
18. For an exhaustive and brilliant exposition of this synthesis see *Bharater Mukti Sangrame Charampanthi Parva*. This book, however, is soft on liberal nationalism. Particularly disappointing is his reading of Khudiram Bose's action. Although he uses very ornamental languages to say that his sacrifice is not forgotten by people, he does not make any historical evaluation of Khudiram Bose's action. Dr Tripathi referred to "the lonely Baul sang of Khudiram's hanging and it shed sullen tears" (Amalesh Tripathi, *The Extremist Challenge* (Bombay: Orient Longmans, 1967, p. 148) his assessment clearly reveals his liberal historian mind: "The Bengal Extremists looked to the idealized 'people' and impatiently expected them to rise. When they did not (*which was natural*), despair led some of the Extremists to the path of individual terror. They thought, again mistakenly, that through terror it would be "easy to bring the ideas of revolution home to the common people." As Barin stated in his trial (1908) , "We never believed that political murder will bring independence. We do it because we believe the people want it." *All that the people wanted was their daily bread and be left alone.*" (emphasis added), *Ibid*, p. 117.
19. W. Sealy, *Connection with the Revolutionary Conspiracies in Bihar and Orissa*, para 69, cited in Jata Shankar Jha, *Early Revolutionary Movement In Bihar* (Patna: K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1977), p. 58.
20. *The Bihar Herald*, 10 September, 1904, cited in Jata Shankar Jha, *Op. cit.*,p. 37.
21. Girija Shankar Raychaudhury, *Shri Aurobindo O Banglar Swadeshi Yug*, p. 369.

22. Bhupendra Kishore Rakshit Ray, *Bharate Sashastra Biplab* (Bengali), p. 42.
23. Kali Charan Ghosh, p.103.
24. Cited in Kali Charan Ghosh, *The Roll of Honour: Anecdotes of Indian Martyrs* Calcutta, Vidya Bharati, 1965, p. 101.
25. Brahammadhab Upadhyay summed up the faith in working for swaraj when he had said on August 9, 1907, at a meeting at Kalighat : “ At the altar of Kali both the sin and the virtue of the *feringhi* needed to be sacrificed. The sin of the *feringhi* consisted in his persistence of repressive measures and could be traced to the battle of Plassey where the *feringhi* hidden amongst the mango grove usurped the sovereignty of India.” About all those “black *feringhi*” who had been infatuated by *feringhi* manners he was equally critical. His death was taken as a kind of “*ichha mrityu*“(death at will) as his death had “ electrified the imagination of the people”. He had desired that his doctors must not use chloroform to make him unconscious for operation as he wanted to bear the pain and see his worldly end!
26. Sushil Sen became a known revolutionary mainly after he was arrested and prosecuted in famous Alipore Bomb Case. He was sentenced seven year jail by the lower court but was released by the High Court . His career as a revolutionary ended in 1915 when he died bravely . He and his revolutionary associates were being chased and he got hit by a bullet. Sensing the end of his life he instructed his friends to cut his head from his dead body and hide it in the mud and throw the body in the river so that they could not be charged for his murder. If his friends were arrested the cause of revolutionaries would be affected, he had reasoned! (For a brief biographic sketch of Sushil Sen see Bhupendra Kishore Rakshit Ray, pp. 44-46.)
27. Jadugopal Mukhopadhyay, *Biplabi Jibaner Smriti*, cited in Bhupendra Kishore Rakshit Ray, Op. cit., p.48.
28. Sedition Committee, 1918, Report, p. 32, cited in Bhupendra Kishore Rakshit Ray, Op. cit., p.49.
29. This is the summary of the views expressed by Bhupendra Kishore Rakshit Roy, a famous revolutionary and a historian of revolutionary activities in Bengal.

Early Life

Khudiram Bose was a boy of 18 years when he threw the bomb in Muzaffarpur which immortalised him as “the first Indian to use any dangerous product of modern science” against the British. In this short life, he hardly had the opportunity to do things which could have given any historian to write at length about him. So barring some details of his early life at Medinipur we do not have much information about his personal life. But, as they say, a life’s



story does not begin with birth and ends with his death. Khudiram life was a very long life. He still remains alive in the memory of all those who love the land of his birth the way a child loves his mother.

Family background

Khudiram was born in 1889 in Habibpur, a village not very far from Midnapore town of Bengal. His grandfather, Ramdhan Basu, had five sons: Trilokyanath, Kamalakanta, Dwarkanath, Iswarchandra and Taraprasad. Khudiram was the son of Trilokyanath Basu. His mother, Lakshmipriya Devi, was the daughter of Dukhiram Das of Kalagram village of Keshpur thana. His father, Trilokyanath was a Tehsildar (revenue collector) in Narajol Raj estate.

Trilokyanath and Lakshmipriya Devi had three daughters- Aparupa, Sarojini and Nanibala. Their two sons died- one after the birth and the other when he was six years of age. They desperately wanted a son. According to a biographer of Khudiram who had the

opportunity to talk to many of his childhood friends and relatives, the mother prayed to Goddess Kali in a Siddheshwari Kali temple near the house for three days. On the third night, goddess Kali appeared in her dream and said to the mother that soon she will give birth to a child. That child would not live for long but he would be remembered forever.¹

When Laksmipriya Devi gave birth to a son, it was decided that the newly born boy should be 'sold' to avoid premature death. As per the customs of those days, he was 'purchased' by his sister by offering three *mutho khudi* (rice). As he was taken up by offering *khudi* he was named Khudiram.²

Khudiram survived but he could not enjoy the love of his parents for long. At the age of six he lost both his parents one after another. His mother died first. After few months his ailing father also expired. Khudiram's father had remarried two weeks before his death.³

Khudiram was lucky that he had a loving elder sister Aparupa Devi. He was very close to her and he remained dependent on her throughout his life. She brought him up like a mother at her home



The house in which Khudiram was born in village Habibpur near Midnapore town of West Bengal

in Hatgachhia village where she was married. Khudiram joined a village school. Later, he was admitted to Hamilton School at Tamluk in 1901. At Hamilton School he impressed everyone with his remarkable courage and capacity to bear pain with dignity. For instance,

once he jumped from a big almond tree. His clothes were torn and he was badly hurt but, when he faced the teacher, he stood erect and showed no sign of pain on his face.⁴

In another incident, he pardoned a class friend who had troubled him. It so happened that while he was reading a book in the reading

session, one of his classmates thrust a pencil around his rectum through a hole in the desk. Khudiram bore the pain during the class but later, blood started coming out of the wound and his friends reported the incident to the teacher. Furious teacher was about to hit the culprit when Khudiram stopped him.⁵ This showed his kind nature.

Khudiram's childhood friends had narrated many stories which indicate that he possessed remarkable courage and cared little about his personal safety. He had no fear of death, a feature which enable him years later to smile when he was sentenced to death for his historic act. Even in his school days he showed this trait of his character. His friends told his biographer that he was not afraid of even poisonous snakes. Often he used to catch a snake, play with it and then release it.

Two years later he was admitted in Midnapore Collegiate School where he studied up to the 3rd class, equivalent to the present day class VIII standard. He was a boy who could not bear injustice and it is said that even at school level he stood against injustice of all sorts and did not hesitate to avenge unjust conduct, whoever might be its victims.⁶

About Khudiram's school life, it is not very well known outside Bengal that he was a very committed social worker. When Cholera broke out in Tamluk town and people were apprehensive to go close to its victims he selflessly nursed patients without bothering much about his own health.⁷

In one of those days, when four-five Cholera deaths were common almost daily, nobody dared to go to the *ghat* in late night where dead bodies were cremated. A tree was considered particularly dangerous as many spirits dwell on that. To test his mental strength Khudiram's friends challenged him to go and touch that dreaded tree late in night. To check whether he did that in real or not, his friends waited to see. In the night, Khudiram went up to the tree and plucked a branch of it. Later, when his friends went and confirmed that he had actually done it he was hailed as a hero.

In another incident Khudiram showed that he had extraordinary

strength to endure pain. A teacher challenged students to show their physical strength by hitting a table with force as many times as possible. Everybody retired after hitting the table 6-7 times. Khudiram hit more than thirty times. Later, his friends found out that his hand was bleeding. Khudiram, however, did not show any sign of pain on his face.⁸

He was meritorious but he took little interest in his studies. He, however, was always loved and admired by his friends who appreciated his courage. He also admired people who loved swadeshi. In 1903, one of his school friends Phani Bhushan Ghosh entered the school in a swadeshi dhoti.⁹ He was ridiculed by his friends. But, Khudiram appreciated Phani Bhushan and he embraced him. After Khudiram's appreciation other friends realised their mistake. Even at the age of 14 Khudiram could show such maturity.

All these, however, caused some anxiety in the mind of Khudiram's guardian. They wanted him to concentrate on his studies. He along with Lalit, the son of his sister, who was about the same age, were admitted in a new school with the hope that they would concentrate on studies in new school environment. In the school, he came into contact with three teachers- Upendra Nath Chandra, the Headmaster, Ramchandra Sen, drillmaster, and Gyanendra Basu (the elder brother of Satyendra Nath Basu). Rajnarayan Basu had been the headmaster of this school in the past. In this school Khudiram studied up to class VIII, till August 1905.

While studying in class II he was attracted towards revolutionary ideas and activities. But, the real break came in 1905 when the spirit of 1905 partition movement had moved entire Bengal. When the spirit of swadeshi movement reached Medinipur Khudiram, then a student of class III (8th standard), was foremost in participating in different activities related to anti partition agitation. He was a regular in exercise sessions, which was prescribed to make young revolutionaries physically sound. He excelled particularly well in parallel bar. In an exercise competition of his school his performance in parallel bar was so eye catching that his drill teacher Ramchandra Sen's salary was raised by five rupees.¹⁰ In those days, he used to exercise regularly to keep his body and mind strong. He was good

in *lathi khela, chhura khela, Asi khela*. Khudiram had also become adept in playing *lathis* in both hands.¹¹ In those days, it was

considered essential for any true revolutionary to pay attention on three things- character building, physical training and knowledge enhancement.¹²

During this period Khudiram was particularly impressed by his teacher Gyanendra Sen. Also that time Satyendra Nath Basu became friendly to Khudiram and Lalit. His age and his friendly approach to his students were reasons of his popularity among them.

Khudiram and Lalit were not good in studies and barely used to scrape through to the next class.¹³ Khudiram's heart was not in his studies in those days of intense agitations against the British rule so he decided to quit his studies for the sake of serving the motherland.

There is another story related to his decision of leaving his studies. On Aswin 1st, Medinipur's teachers, students and prominent citizens swore at a temple of Jagannath that until the partition of Bengal was not cancelled foreign salt, sugar and foreign clothes would

remain forbidden. This changed Khudiram's life. After this he did not find any satisfaction in attending classes in his school.¹⁴ It is



Satyendra Nath Basu(top) and Hemchandra Das(above): Leaders of Aurobindo's Secret Society in Medinipur.

said that he was deeply inspired by anti-British campaign of nationalist Bengali leaders. He decided to follow Satyen Bose, who, besides carrying out the responsibilities of a teacher, was organising young men for revolutionary movements in rural areas of Midnapore. Satyen Bose was very impressed by Khudiram and he decided to recruit him in his organisation. A branch of Aurobindo's secret society was at Medinipur. It was run by Gyanendra Nath Basu, Satyendra Nath Basu and Hemchandra Das. They used to watch the activities of youth of the area so that the best of them could be picked for greater responsibilities. They also organised meetings to involve youth in its activities. In those meetings, they were given books like the *Gita*, Swami Vivekananda's works, and books on revolution. They were also trained to use *lathi* (stick), *chhura* (knife) and *asi* (sword). Khudiram was given the early lessons of revolutionary path in this centre. He was particularly close to Satyendra Nath Bose, the youngest of three leaders of the secret society.¹⁵

Khudiram got excited by this and without hesitation he left the school to serve the country. Whatever be the case it should be said that he was willing to do anything to serve his country and Satyen Bose was instrumental in his entry into the revolutionary organisation.

Bengal partition was announced in July 1905 and the Swadeshi movement started in full swing on 16 October, 1905. But, even before that there had been protest meetings in different parts of Bengal. In the first week of August, 1905, a huge public protest meeting was organised at Medinipur. In those days, the use of swadeshi made goods was aggressively supported by anti-partition agitators. Khudiram had also taken the oath of swadeshi service. He was foremost in organising meetings and helping all those who had been organising meetings to arouse popular sentiments of common people against the British rule. He was involved in picketing, organising demonstrations, treatment of patients and all those who needed care.

In the Medinipur meeting people from all walks of life assembled. It was estimated that more than ten thousand people gathered in

this meeting. Towards the success of this meeting Khudiram worked very hard and ran from one place to another. He, however, did not give any public speech in any of these meeting. He was happy helping others in getting prominence.¹⁶

Midnapore had become a strong base for swadeshi supporters. From 1906 onwards we come across many cases in which swadeshi activists had issued warnings to merchants for not importing any *bilati* (foreign) salt, cloth or any other item. In one of such cases, the Raja of Narajole asked merchants of Midnapore not to import *Belat* cloth for sale.¹⁷ Government reports had also confirmed that “between February 1906 and December 1907 the swadeshi propaganda was actively pursued” at Midnapore.¹⁸

Khudiram was successful in creating an image of an uncompromising swadeshi supporter who was determined to boycott foreign goods. Due to his efforts foreign goods disappeared from the local market. On some occasions the shopkeepers were forced to get rid of foreign goods. He became famous for his zeal to boycott foreign goods. Shopkeepers who kept foreign goods were scared of him. Once Khudiram gathered that a shopkeeper, despite repeated requests and warnings, smuggled foreign clothes. Khudiram went to that place, where the foreign made clothes were stocked, with a match and bottle of kerosene and put the entire stock on fire.¹⁹

Writing about Khudiram of those days Bhupendra Nath Basu, is of the view that Khudiram considered those shopkeepers anti-national who, despite repeated warnings, brought foreign clothes. Khudiram was a determined person, once he took a task he never left it without finishing that.²⁰

Khudiram's biographers and his contemporaries have written about his involvement in relief works during a natural calamity which hit Midnapore in those days. During the flood of Kanswati river he heard of the plight of villagers of Gobardhanpur, a village which was situated five miles from Midnapore town. Khudiram collected some clothes, foodstuff and other material and rushed to that village with some of his friends. He helped children and old

people in reaching to safer places. He distributed relief material and stayed there for some days during which he helped villagers in reconstructing their houses. He did all this without informing his sister and brother in law, his guardian. After more than a week's relief work when he returned, his guardian tried to convince him not to indulge in such activities and rejoin his studies. Khudiram paid no heed to these advices.²¹ He, however, realised that it would be difficult for him to continue from his relatives' house. After all, his brother in law was a paid servant of British government. Khudiram decided to move out of his house. He got accommodation in the house of Pyare Lal Ghosh who was a famous local lawyer.²²

In this phase, a sense of detachment overtook him. He wrote a letter to his elder sister in which he mentioned that it would be too much for him to abide by this worldly norm. He reiterated that he did not want to study in the school anymore and he found no justification of wasting his sister's money for that. Khudiram declared, "I will henceforth travel in different parts of this country."²³

Khudiram's detachment mode proved short-lived and soon he returned to his house, hungry and exhausted. A writer has given some details of his experiences during this phase. According to that account, Khudiram wanted to live as a peasant in Bankura district to get acquainted with the experiences of ordinary peasant life. But, he was unable to do so because local inhabitants took him as a spy of the police and he had no option but to escape!²⁴

Khudiram returned to his sister and tried not to disclose how he had lived in a village and faced a hard life but his sister came to know about it once she saw his rough palms which bore clear signs of hard physical work.

Khudiram was a very kind hearted person. In a cold morning, a beggar came to his house. Deeply moved by his condition Khudiram gave a very expensive *pashmina* shawl to the beggar. The beggar thought that the boy was making fun of him but when Khudiram insisted and said that "there is nothing more I can offer you," he was overwhelmed. That shawl was given to his late father by Raja Narendra Lal Khan. Khudiram's sister objected to his giving away

of this shawl by saying that this beggar would never use this himself and he would simply go to the market and sell it. Khudiram said, "Let him do that. At least, the money he would get by selling this would help him to some extent."²⁵

As a Young Revolutionary

Much before his involvement in the Muzaffarpur bomb case Khudiram was actively involved with revolutionary activities. After joining the revolutionary group he stayed in Satyen's *tantshala* (handloom factory) which was used for sheltering and training revolutionaries.

It was in the latter end or beginning of 1906 that Midnapore gained important recruits to the Revolutionary Party as Abinash Chandra Chakravarty, Kartick Chandra Dutt, Bhujangdhar Ghosh, Chandra Kanta Chakravarti and Indra Nath Nandi joined it.

In Midnapore, by the end of 1906 a group of men with revolutionary ideas were recruiting young people and collecting funds for their party. Satyen's handloom factory and Chhatra Bhandar were the party's hubs.²⁶ The young recruits were given physical, moral and ideological training. Revolutionary literature viz. the biographies of famous revolutionaries like Mazzini and Garibaldi, the religious books like *The Gita*, *history of the French revolution* etc. were given to young revolutionaries so that they could realise why they had to wage a war against the British rule. Revolutionaries were also given training of using arms.

In those days, Bengali youths were getting influenced by heavy dose of militant write ups appearing regularly in Bengali newspapers like *Bande Mataram*, *Jugantar* and *Sandhya*. Khudiram himself had admitted later that he was inspired by these swadeshi magazines.²⁷ *Bande Mataram* was edited by Aurobindo Ghosh in 1907 and it was generally assumed that Ghosh brothers were involved in writing and publishing revolutionary literature in Calcutta.²⁸

In those days, the anti-partition agitation was in full swing and nationalists were campaigning for the boycott of foreign goods. When the Swadeshi movement started Satyendra Nath Basu opened



'Jugantar'(top), 'Bande Mataram'(left) and 'Sandhya'(right): newspapers which sowed the seeds of nationalism in the young generation

a shop named Chhatra Bhandar (Students' Store) which sold only swadeshi goods.²⁹ This worked as a centre of meeting for the young revolutionaries both as a centre of swadeshi propaganda and revolutionary planning. The Police also admitted in its report that, "As a result of the establishment of the 'Chhatra Bhandar' there were many cases of arson, riot, and assault in Midnapore arising out of Swadeshi propaganda."³⁰ Usually some 30-32 swadeshi supporters, referred in those days as Bande Mataram Party, used to come shouting *Bande Mataram* to burn foreign items.³¹

According to the intelligence reports of Midnapore police, there were many centres where the revolutionaries could meet.³² Satyendra Nath was an agent of newspapers like *Jugantar*, *Sandhya*, *Bande Mataram*, *Navashakti* etc. and the students used to read articles of these papers largely through their access to this place. The students also helped in the circulation of these papers. Besides these papers, the young men got the facility of a library developed in this shop.³³ Two books were particularly read by young readers- *Bartaman Rajniti* (Current Politics) and *Mukti Kon Pathe*.³⁴

There was another centre of these young revolutionaries in a building adjacent to Satyendra Nath's house just in front of a Kali temple. It is said that the revolutionaries used to take the oath to serve the motherland by putting a *Tilak* of the blood of sacrificed goat on the forehead.

Khudiram was in forefront of all activities of these young revolutionaries. According to one account, Khudiram got immense satisfaction in burning cloth of British manufacture. He found adventure in sinking boats carrying salt imported from Britain.³⁵ He had been involved with some encounters with the Police and was arrested and kept in jail in 1906. This was also indicative of how strongly he felt against the foreign rule.

In February 1906, an agricultural exhibition was held in the compound of old jail house at Medinipur. Many people went to see this exhibition. On the last day, when the District Magistrate was distributing certificates Khudiram was distributing copies of 'Bande Mataram',³⁶ a booklet published by Satyendra Nath Bose which carried revolutionary write-ups in Bengali. He executed this risky task effortlessly. The ease and composure shown by Khudiram while distributing this booklet impressed Satyendra Nath who was watching all this from a distance. Khudiram gave a copy of this booklet to a teacher Ramcharan Sen. Sen quickly realised that the booklet carried seditious articles and he tried to stop its distribution. Khudiram ignored Sen's warnings. Then, Sen told a policeman to get hold of Khudiram with booklets. When the police constable tried to stop Khudiram he gave him a push and hit him very hard on his nose. Then, sensing the trouble, he vanished from the scene.

Khudiram was prosecuted for distribution of prohibited anti-state documents and an order of his arrest was issued. But, no case of was filed against him for hitting the constable as this would have embarrassed the police force.

The secret society members were very apprehensive that Khudiram, then a boy of sixteen, could spill the beans while facing the torture of police. To test his character his associates mentioned demoralising details of tortures. These details failed to produce any impression on the determined face of Khudiram. This gave relief to his friends. Later, Khudiram was arrested at Pyarelal's house. He was prosecuted under the Act 121 (for waging war against the Emperor) and Act 124 (A) for anti state action and he was put on trial in the session court. These were very serious charges which could fetch him serious punishment. Khudiram's lawyer was K. B.

Datt and Pyarelal Ghosh. In the case Khudiram cited three people as defence witness- Purna Chandra Sen, Gopal Chandra Banerjee and Rash Bihari Bose.³⁷ In this case, the main evidence giver was Ramcharan Sen. Satyendra Nath Basu's evidence was also taken as he was also present at the exhibition. Interestingly, his evidence was taken from the government's side. His evidence went against the prosecution for which he was later penalized and, dismissed from his job of Medinipur collectorate. This loss of job at the Collector's office meant very little for Satyendra Nath as his heart was with revolutionary activism.

Many people came to witness the court proceedings daily. On 13 April, 1906 when the judgement was to be announced it seemed that the entire city had assembled in the court.³⁸ Khudiram was told to divulge the name of the person who gave him that material for distribution. The judge ordered him to point towards the person if he was present in the court. Satyendra Nath was very much present at that time in the court. Khudiram told the court that the person who gave him those booklets was not present in the court. He was found guilty but considering his age he was released.

The release of Khudiram even after distributing such dangerous reading material and hitting the police constable was celebrated throughout the town. He was garlanded, seated on a horse cart and a big procession followed him. The celebrations continued till night and ended with the show of fire crackers. This felicitation overwhelmed the heart of young Khudiram.

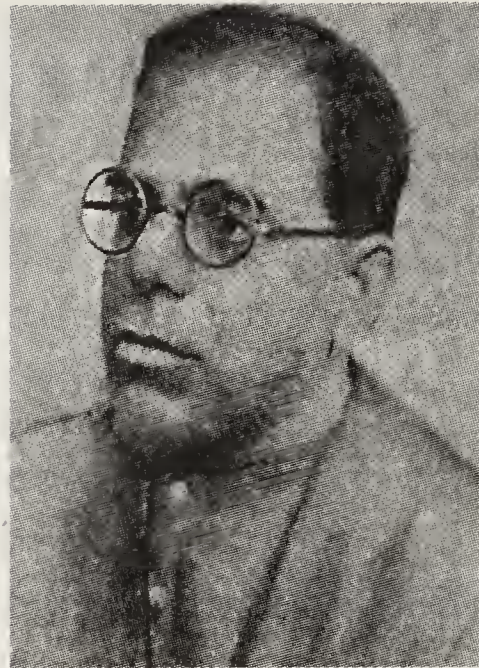
The man who had given evidence against Khudiram became a very unpopular . A few months after the release of Khudiram Ramchandra Sen was approached by a man who introduced himself as the peon of Barrister K. B. Datt. He also showed a forged letter of Datt. After seeing this Sen came out. Once he came out the visitor hit him very hard and disappeared. Sen filed a case and accused Khudiram for this as he had given evidence against him. He was clearly shaken by peoples' hostile reaction against his evidence against Khudiram.³⁹

In the same year Khudiram was gripped by Malaria fever. As

was the norm in those days an *ojha* was called to get rid of the evil spirit. When he came to know about this he uttered-” evil spirit would go only if the real evil spirit (British) is chased away from this country.”⁴⁰

In 1907, District Political Conference was held. Khudiram was a volunteer in that conference. He worked weeks before the conference under the guidance of Satyendra Nath. He collected contributions and coordinated among the volunteers. In this conference the dignitaries included Surendra Nath Banerjee, Krishna Kumar Mitra, Aurobindo Ghosh and others. A debate started between the Moderate and the Extremist groups of the Indian National Congress. From the Extremist side a proposal of a direct action or struggle was floated. This was considered too radical and soon the differences between the two groups became so pronounced that two different conferences were held. Satyendra Nath, Khudiram and others sided with the extremist group who called themselves nationalists. Aurobindo was the leader of this group. Khudiram demonstrated against Surendranath Banerjee and other moderate leaders in the political conference of Midnapore. The moderate political agenda was not appreciated by young revolutionaries like Khudiram. He was convinced that the primary objective of young revolutionaries was to mobilise fund and strike against the foreigners as and when the opportunity comes. In the closing months of 1907 Khudiram went to visit Amrit Babu, his brother in law. He planned to loot a Government *dak* for raising money for revolutionary aims. He snatched a bag but he was seen doing this. However, no body came to say anything against him before the police. Someone else was punished for this act and was sentenced to eight month long imprisonment. After snatching the *dak* Khudiram covered eight miles in the night and boarded a steamer to reach Medinipur via Kolaghat.⁴¹

Khudiram was given *agni deeksha* (oath) by Satyendra Nath Basu and Hemchandra Das.⁴² The latter was bent on bringing bomb technique to the revolutionary organisation for greater efficiency in their strikes. He sold a part of his *zamindari* and went abroad to learn the techniques of bomb making.⁴³ A writer has claimed that Khudiram was sent to Kanthi, Tamluk and other places for mobilising youth for revolutionary activities. As per the direction given to him by his leaders Khudiram started his campaign earnestly.⁴⁴



Ullaskar Datta (left) and Upendra Bandopadhyay(right): nationalist leaders who motivated Khudiram Bose to follow the path of revolution

Khudiram, however, had to come to Calcutta as he was closely watched by Midnapore police. His brother in law, Amrit Lal, had been facing problems due to Khudiram's activities.⁴⁵

In Calcutta, Khudiram stayed with his distant relative- Satish Chandra who lived in Cornwallis street. Satish Chandra was a school teacher. During his stay with his uncle Khudiram listened to the inspiring speeches of Bipin Chandra Pal, Surendra Nath Banerjee, Gispati Kavyatirtha and other leaders in the meetings held at Beadon square and College square. Those speeches convinced him further that the foreign rule was exploitative and unjust and all Indians must fight against it. Here in Calcutta, Khudiram came in contact with Aurobindo, Barin Ghosh, Kanai Lal Datta, Upendra Bandopadhyay, Ullaskar Datta and other revolutionaries.⁴⁶

The anti-partition movement lost its momentum by now and the revolutionaries were getting desperate to do something. Meanwhile, the Government machinery was ruthlessly inflicting severest punishment on them. The government suppression began in 1906. In those days, the most hated man among the revolutionaries was Kingsford who found pleasure in giving severest punishment to revolutionaries. In one of his telling decisions he ordered flogging of 15 years old Sushil Kumar Sen for hitting an English Sergeant on his face. This kind of sentence was resented by a large number

of people in Calcutta. Kingsford, as Chief Presidency Magistrate of Calcutta, from August 1904 to March 1908, had inflicted merciless punishment on all who had shown signs of patriotism in their action or in their writings.⁴⁷ To teach him a lesson the revolutionary organisation decided to kill him.⁴⁸

In the early 1908, Barindra Kumar Ghosh, a prominent leader of the Jugantar group, decided to send Prafulla Chaki to Muzaffarpur where Kingsford had been transferred. This was a difficult job and when Khudiram Bose came to know about this plan, he showed his eagerness to be a part of this expedition. Barindra Kumar Ghosh was not convinced but he was persuaded by Hemchandra Das Kanungo, a revolutionary leader of Midnapore who knew Khudiram well, to let Khudiram accompany Prafulla Chaki. Both were given bombs, revolvers and pistols from Manicktalla Bagan's stock of arms.⁴⁹ There is another theory of Khudiram's involvement with the plan of killing of Kingsford. This theory was believed in the police circles. To them, the involvement of Khudiram with this plan was a logical culmination of his intense involvement with the revolutionary activities which advocated killing of British officers, destroying bridges, burning stocks of foreign articles as their duty as sons of this country. At least, two indicators were cited in the police files.

In the first case, D. I. G.(Crime)of police recorded: "In January 1908 a private detective was employed (by government).... he produced two revolvers one of which was an ivory handled one. This revolver, he stated, belonged to Satyendra Nath Bose, and (it) was to be used to assassinate Mr Watson. This same revolver was the one found at Muzaffarpur."⁵⁰

Khudiram's name as an important member of revolutionary group figured in Naraingarh Train wrecking case⁵¹ of 6 December, 1907. The police linked Khudiram with this case and its report narrated :

" ... Krishna Chandra Dey wrote to his uncle Jamini Mallick that men were ready to start for blowing H. H.'s Special train and asked him whether he could help them. Jamini Mallick held a secret meeting in his house which was attended by Surendra Nath

Mukherjee, Satyendra Nath Bose, Santosh Das, Poran Chapri, Prokash Maity, Prafulla Maity, Khudiram Bose and others. It was decided to send Khudiram Bose to bring down the man from Calcutta. Khudiram went to Calcutta and brought down Barindra Ghosh. Jamini Mallick accommodated them in his house for a day. On the second day, these two men with Jamini Mallick, Khudiram Bose, Satyendra Nath Bose, and P. Maity went to Naraingarh and selected the place for laying the mine and returned to Jamini Mallick's house and stopped there... (after receiving the correct date and hours) Barindra Ghosh, Khudiram and Prokash Maity left for Naraingarh to lay the mine."⁵²

Prafulla Chaki

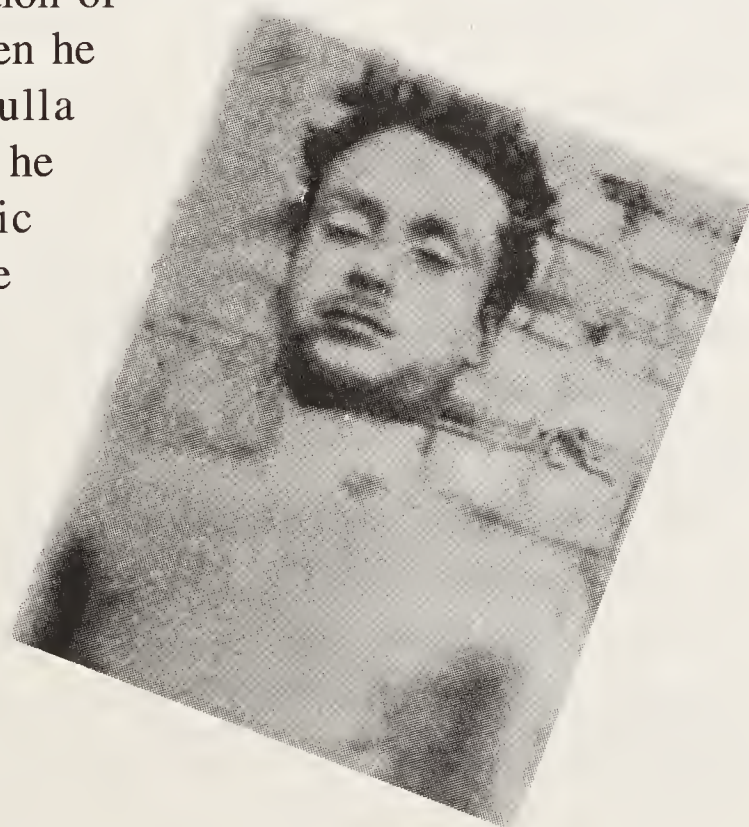
Prafulla Chaki was born on 10 December, 1888 in a village Bihar in North Bengal in a respectable middle class Hindu Kayastha family. He was the son of Rajnarayan Chaki and Swarnamoyee Devi. Rajnarayan Chaki was an employee of the court of the Nawab family of Bogra. Prafulla's grandfather was Chandra Narayan who was a reputed scholar of Sanskrit and an astrologer. He was well versed in Urdu and Persian as well. He worked as a Mokhtar and was a widely travelled man.⁵³

Rajnarayan Chaki had no children from his first wife. He remarried after the death of his wife and his second wife Swarnamoyee brought joy in his life with the birth of Prafulla. But, Rajnarayan did not survive long. Like Khudiram, Prafulla also lost his father early and was brought up by his mother Swarnamoyee. Prafulla got early education in his village school and District High School at Rangpur. He was a strongly built boy. While in school, he joined 'Bangamadhab Samiti', a local organisation and came into contact with revolutionary leaders. Under their influence, Prafulla started studying Swami Vivekananda's works, the *Gita* and patriotic and revolutionary literature.⁵⁴ He was prominent among the local students of Rangpur for participating in demonstrations against Lord Curzon's partition of Bengal pronouncement. He was a student of 2nd class (now class IX) when he was expelled from the school for participating in these demonstrations. He joined the Rangpur

National School founded by the nationalists for the education of those students who were expelled from schools for their nationalist activities.

Prafulla Chaki's name had figured in some secret communications where he was mentioned as a trainee who got training under one Swami Brahmanada⁵⁵ who gave training to youth for the service of the motherland. Prafulla Chaki, Upendra Banerjee, Ullaskar Dutta, Satish Chandra Sarkar and Bibhuti Bhushan Sarkar and Dr. Mitra went to Dhuni Saheb in Nepal on an unsuccessful mission to convert *sadhus* there to support revolutionary activities.⁵⁶ Hemangini Devi, wife of Kedar Nath Banerjee, a famous pleader of Patna and a financier and follower of Dr J. N. Mitra, called this group of five young persons as 'Panch Pandava'.⁵⁷ According to one source, four persons –Prafulla, Upendra, Ullaskar and Bibhuti had visited Kedarnath Banerjee in 1906-07 and they were introduced to Hemangini Devi by Satish Chandra Sarkar and J. N. Mitra.⁵⁸

These details show that Prafulla was deeply involved with revolutionary activities and used to travel to distant places as part of revolutionary activities with other like minded Bengali young men. It is commonly believed that his commitment and his robust physique caught the attention of Barindrakumar Ghosh when he visited Rangapur. Prafulla impressed him and soon he became an enthusiastic organiser in the neighbouring districts. Barindrakumar Ghosh trusted him completely and when he started a secret bomb factory at Maniktala in 1907, he summoned Prafulla.⁵⁹ He was



given some important assignments also. Kamala Das Gupta has written that Barindrakumar Ghosh deputed Prafulla Chaki to dispose of Sir Bamfylde who had aroused intense hatred and contempt among people for carrying on a terroristic method of administration as Lieutenant Governor of East Bengal and Assam. Due to some sudden changes in the tour programme of Bamfylde Prafulla could not execute his plan.

Some other evidences also suggest that Prafulla Chaki had become a very important member of revolutionary group under Aurobindo Ghosh. After the Muzaffarpur bomb episode an intense search to get evidence to link the revolutionary group of Calcutta with the incident was conducted and some important evidences were collected. A case, more famously known as Alipur bomb case, clearly show how the bomb throwing activity of Muzaffarpur was linked with the preparations at Calcutta's Maniktala Garden. In one evidence, exhibit No. 276 was a gunny bag found at Maniktala on which was written "P. Chaki, Baidyanath, E. I. R".⁶⁰ Another evidence, collected by the search of Sil's Lodge, another centre of revolutionaries, Exhibit No. 770 was a copy of the National Anthem (*Bande Mataram*) which bore the name "P. C. Chaki" on the back. A postal peon had deposed that he had seen Prafulla Chaki with other revolutionaries at the Sil's Lodge.⁶¹

When the Jugantar group decided to eliminate Kingsford the job was to be given to somebody who could be trusted fully. The responsibility of this was given to Prafulla Chaki. Initially only he was to execute this task. But, Hemchandra Das Kanungo, an experienced revolutionary, insisted on not sending him alone. Khudiram was then called for accompanying Prafulla in this expedition.

Khudiram was told to reach Hemchandra Kanungo's residence at Maniktala. Thus, Prafulla Chaki and Khudiram Bose moved out of Calcutta to commit "the first distinctly political murder in Bengal" as members of Barindrakumar Ghosh's group with the blessings of Barindrakumar Ghosh and Hemchandra. Motilal has recorded that he came to know from Sris Chandra Ghosh, a revolutionary that

Aurobindo had blessed Khudiram and Prafulla by touching their heads on the eve of their journey to Muzaffarpur.⁶² It is said that Khudiram and Prafulla were not familiar with each other before this journey.

Khudiram was told that his collaborator's name was Dinesh Chandra Ray and Prafulla was told that his friend's name was Durga Das Sen.⁶³

Prafulla and Khudiram reached Muzaffarpur in the third week of April 1908 and stayed in a local Dharmashala. They were helped by some local people. According to one source, when they ran short of funds a local gentleman, an influential employee of a local zamindar helped them. This sympathiser also helped them in getting accommodation in a Dharmashala. They received a money order from Calcutta through this gentleman who was later hauled up before the court for rendering help to Prafulla and Khudiram.⁶⁴ They waited for a week for suitable opportunity. Kingsford usually did not go anywhere else other than the court. Ultimately, they came to know that Kingsford used to leave the club for his home at 8.30 in the evening after playing bridge. This seemed suitable for them as this would give them opportunity of leaving the place of action in the darkness of night.

This date- 30th April, 1908, was going to be a red letter day in the history of militant revolutionary history of India.

NOTES

1. Nagendra Kumar Guha Ray, *Shahid Yugal*, Calcutta, B Singh Brothers, 1355 (Bangabd), p. 5. This book contains a picture of the temple where Khudiram's mother had prayed for her son for three days.
2. In those days, it was customary to 'buy' a newly born baby by offering either *kuri* or *khudi* three or five times. If offered three times the child was called Teenkuri and if offered five times the child was named Paanchkuri.
3. Nagendra Kumar Guha Ray, *Op. cit.*, p. 6-7.
4. *Ibid*, p.14.
5. *Ibid*, p. 15. For more details of Khudiram's courage and strength of

- his character see Ishan Chandra Mahapatra, *Boy Revolutionary of India*, Orient Book Company, Calcutta.
6. There are so many stories of his early childhood when this young school boy had shown that he cared little about his safety. This trait of Khudiram is also attested by his biographical sketch by Kamala Das Gupta. (See Kamala Das Gupta, '*Khudiram Bose O Prafulla Chaki*, Prabashi, Agrahayan, 1372 B.S.)
 7. Ishan Chandra, Mahapatra, *Shahid Khudiram*, p.45.
 8. *Ibid*, p. 16.
 9. Even before 1905 swadeshi clothes were brought from the swadeshi mills of Bombay in Bengal. These clothes were called *mayer deba mota kapar* (coarse cloth given by the mother).
 10. Nagendra Kumar Guha Ray, *Shahid Yugal*, p. 41.
 11. *Ibid*, p. 94.
 12. Nagendra Kumar Guha Ray, *Op. cit.*, 44.
 13. This information is based on Annapurna Devi's account, cited in Nagendra Kumar Guha Ray, *Op. cit.*, p. 41.
 14. Ishan Chandra Mahapatra, *Shahid Khudiram*, Calcutta, Vidyasagar Publications, 1948, p. 44.
 15. Nagendra Kumar Guha Ray, *Op. cit*, pp. 87-88.
 16. Annapurna Devi's account, cited in Nagendra Guha Ray, *Op. cit*, p. 44.
 17. Midnapore Conspiracy Case, I. B. Records, Secret Folder, 166/1908, p. 11, Bengal State Archives. This file contains many evidences which strongly suggest that Khudiram was very actively engaged in these activities. He was named by one Akhoy Kumar Pal as one of 25 people who were active in 1906.
 18. In these days, a local paper-*Medina Bandhab* was started by Deb Das Karan. 'This paper strongly advocated the principles held by the swadeshi party and occasionally published excitable articles.' (Midnapore Conspiracy Case, p. 15.)
 19. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
 20. Bhupendra Nath Basu, 'Khudiram Smarane', *Swadhinata*, 21 July, 1947, cited in Nagendra Guha Ray, *Op. cit*, p. 45. Bhupendra Nath Basu had also mentioned that in addition to lathi play Khudiram was also an enthusiastic football player.
 21. Nagendra Kumar Guha Ray, *Op. cit*, pp. 46-47.
 22. *Ibid*, p. 47.
 23. *Ibid*.

24. Narendra Nath Das, 'Shahid Khudiram', *Anand Bazar Patrika*, cited in Nagendra Kumar Guha Ray, *Op. cit.*, p. 49.
25. Nagendra Guha Ray, *Ibid*, p. 49.
26. 'Note on the Midnapore Revolutionary Conspiracy', Confidential, no file no./1909, p. 5. This file mentioned 10 prominent names who were associated with *tantshala*. They were Satyendra Nath Bose, his brothers- Subodh and Jnanendra, Khudiram Bose, Nirapado Roy, Sachindra Ghosh, Jitendra Banerjee, Indra Nath Nandi, of Calcutta, Kartick Chandra Dutt and Manik Lal Dutt.
27. Chinmay Chowdhury, *Mul Nathi Theke Khudiram O Prafulla Chaki*, Calcutta, Dey's Publishing, 1999, p. 23.
28. Aurobindo Ghosh's brother Barin Ghosh was a famous revolutionary. He was close to Sister Nivedita who was considered sympathetic to militant groups. Aurobindo's another brother Manomohan Ghosh was the printer and publisher of *Karmayogin*. He was convicted for publishing a letter written by Aurobindo ('Swadeshvasir Prati') and sentenced six month rigorous imprisonment. Narayan Press which had printed this was closed.
29. *Ibid*, p. 88.
30. Midnapore Conspiracy Case, p. 38.6666 For many cases of merchants' complaints see Midnapore Conspiracy Case, pp. 41-42.
31. For many cases of merchants' complaints see Midnapore Conspiracy Case, pp-41 to 42
32. Secret society of Midnapore had 52 members (according to confessions of Surendra Nath Mukherjee) whose members could meet in nine different places at Midnapore: Basant Malati Akhara, Rash Mancha of the Mallicks, the houses of Kamini prostitute, Gangaram Dutt, Gopal Chandra Banerjee, Jamini Mallick, Raja of Mahishadal, Deb Das Karan and Upendra Maity. (See Midnapore Conspiracy Case, I. B. Secret Folder, 16/1908, pp. 17-19, B S A).
33. *Ibid*.
34. Aparupa Ghosh, 'Atripta Khudiram', cited in Nagendra Guha Ray, *Op. cit.*, p. 89.
35. Kamala Das Gupta, *Ibid*.
36. It was originally titled 'Sonar Bangla' written by B. K. Basu, the advocate who had appeared for revolutionaries in famous Alipur Bomb case. This was translated into English

and it appeared in *Pioneer*. (See Ishan Chandra Mahapatra, *Shahid Khudiram*, p. 56).

37. Midnapore Conspiracy Case, p. 37.
38. Nagendra Kumar Guha Ray, *Op. cit.*, p. 94.
39. *Ibid*, p. 94.
40. *Ibid*.
41. *Ibid*, p. 95.
42. *Ibid*, p. 98.
43. *Ibid*.
44. Chinmay Chauddhuri, *Op. cit.*, p. 35.
45. *Ibid*.
46. *Ibid*.
47. K. C. Ghosh, p. 160.
48. Details on this is taken up elsewhere in this book.
49. Nagendra Kumar Guha Ray, *Shahid Yugal*, p.103.
50. D.I. G.'s report, dated 12/9/08. (see I. B., 16/1908, p. 15). The story of this informer of police is very remarkable. The man who passed all vital information, Abdur Rahman, was actually a teacher of young revolutionaries who was a close confidant of Satyendra Bose and others. They shared vital internal information with him. Abdur Rahman was a committed teacher who taught revolutionaries wrestling, sword, *bana* and *patta*. Khudiram and others were his students for months. But, once a Hindu quarrelled with a Muslim and he received head injuries. The local Muslims were unhappy with Abdur Rahman as he was teaching Hindus. Later, he was approached by Mazaharul Huq, the local police officer, to supply vital information about the group of young revolutionaries. Rahman passed on all details to the police officer on a regular basis. He gave all planning, information and level of preparation report. He was a respected *ostadji* (master) who could not be suspected. The level of confidence was so great that Rahman asked for two revolvers which the group had acquired. Rahman showed these revolvers to the police officer. It was largely on the basis of this man's information the police arrested revolutionaries in May 1908. (For a very detailed statement of Rahman see 'Note on the Midnapore Revolutionary Conspiracy' pp. 15-28).
51. According to Nikhilesh Ray Chaudhuri, on 6 December 1907, Barin Ghosh, Ullaskar Datt, Bibhuti Bhushan Sarkar and Prafulla Chaki planted a bomb with the intent of killing Lt Governor Andrew Frazer at a railway line near Naraingarh

railway station. (See Nikhilesh Ray Chaudhuri, 'Khudiram keno Chirsmaraniya', *Bartaman*, 8 June, 2008). This could not materialise as the bomb was not properly planted.

52. Midnapore Conspiracy Case, p.57.
53. *Ibid*, p. 148.
54. For more details see Kamala Das Gupta, '*Khudiram Basu O Prafulla Chaki*', in *Prabashi*, Agrahayan 1372 (B. S.).
55. His original name was Dr J. N. Mitra, a resident of Bihar who had obtained degree of F. A. from Calcutta University and L. M. S. from Calcutta Medical College. He practiced as a doctor at Bankipur and was famous as Muni Babu. Inspired by revolutionary nationalist ideals he left his practice and started propagating revolutionary ideas.
56. Jadu Gopal Mukhopadhyaya, *Biplab Jibanir Smriti*, p. 28, cited in J. S. Jha, *Op.cit.*, p. 51.
57. J. S. Jha, *Op. cit.*, p. 72.
58. J. S. Jha, *Op. cit.*, p. 53.
59. *Ibid.*.
60. J. S. Jha, *Op. cit.*, p. 60.
61. J. S. Jha, *Op. cit.*, p. 61.
62. Motilal Roy, 'Aamar Dekha Biplab O Biplabi', cited in Saral Kumar Chatterjee, 'Anushilan Samiti as a Revolutionary Party: 1905-1913' in Tridib Chaudhuri (ed.), *Freedom Struggle and Anushilan Samiti* Vol 1, Calcutta: Anushilan Samiti, 1979, p. 40.
63. Nikhilesh Ray Chaudhuri, *Op. Cit.*
64. K. C. Ghosh, *Op. cit.*, pp. 160-61.

Muzaffarpur Bomb Case

Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Kumar Chaki reached Muzaffarpur in April 1908 and decided to stay and watch for a while before strike. In Motijheel area of Muzaffarpur there was a *Dharmashala* (lodge) of a Bihari zamindar Parmeshwar Narayan Mahato. In that *Dharmashala* a Bengali Head clerk Kishori Mohan Bandopadhyay was so influential that it was known as Kishori Babu's *Dharmashala*. Khudiram and Prafulla decided to stay there as two Bengalis staying in a Bengali's *Dharmashala* was not likely to be taken much notice of. From here they started gathering information about Kingsford's daily activities.

Around 20 April Calcutta Police received a spy's input that the revolutionaries had taken the final decision of killing Kingsford. This information was taken seriously but the Police decided not to start arresting anyone as this might alert the revolutionaries. They kept on gathering information secretly at Calcutta and passed it on to Kingsford.¹

The Administration of Bengal Under Sir Andrew Fraser (1903-08) has noted: "The bomb which was thrown by Khudiram in the *Amabasya* night, which is considered auspicious night for the worship of Kali. Kali is the principal goddess worshipped by *Saktas*, a prominent sect among Bengali Hindus. It was also the first day of new (Hindu) year and the revolutionaries probably waited for it "in order that the murder might usher in the year".² It may be a coincidence that this daring act took place on *Amabasya* day and revolutionaries might have only thought about the benefits of darkness and nothing else but, there can not be any doubt that this day ushered in a new phase of Indian national movement. The evening of 30 April 1908 at Muzaffarpur, Bihar, was an important date in the history of Indian national movement. On this day Khudiram threw a bomb into a carriage with the motive of killing D. H. Kingsford. On 30th April, 1908, Khudiram and Prafulla Chaki reached

a place in front of Kingsford's house and kept waiting under a tree. While they were roaming in that area in the evening a security guard saw them. They were told to leave the place but as both of them were quite young and seemed harmless young men the guard did not take any action against them.

While Prafulla and Khudiram were waiting in ambush Kingsford and his wife were playing bridge with Mrs and Mr Kennedy till 8.30 P.M. Kennedys and Kingsfords left the place in similar looking carriages. As one of these two cars approached Khudiram and Prafulla sprang out from the shadow of one of the tall trees that lined the broad thoroughfare separating the residential buildings from the maidan. According to a source, Khudiram and Prafulla had in their possession three revolvers and one bomb. They had kept

revolvers which was to be used if the bomb would have failed to explode for killing their target.³ When the car reached to them, Khudiram ran towards the carriage and threw the bomb with full force at the carriage.



Damaged Carriage after bomb throwing: Alarm bell for British rule

Unfortunately, Kingsford was not in the carriage on which Khudiram had thrown the bomb. The bomb killed the daughter and wife of a local Barrister Pringle Cannedy. This act of Khudiram, a boy of 18 years of age, made him a hero in the annals of Indian revolutionary movement. This daring act might have failed in its immediate objective of killing the enemy of revolutionaries Kingsford but it served a greater service – it made an emphatic statement that the Britishers were the enemy of this nation and the youth of this country were ready to make any effort to punish those who would dare to come in their way. The

spirit behind this bomb throwing at the carriage was shared and supported by thousands of other youth who wanted to emulate this remarkable man.

The British Government machinery was shocked that despite their all efforts two Bengali young men came to Muzaffarpur, traced their target, threw the bomb and flee from the site. The local authorities had been alerted by the Calcutta Police⁴ but these two revolutionaries succeeded in eluding the Police at Muzaffarpur. In Calcutta, the Police did not want to take any further action as the revolutionaries “might take alarm and re-form at another centre which would not be known, and would therefore, presumably be more dangerous.”⁵

Khudiram and Prafulla both were too young to execute this kind of action with professional expertise. They executed their original plan but, while leaving the scene in a hurry they left their shoes and *chaddar* at the site. Soon, it became obvious that this was the work of two Bengali young men who were seen on the road nearby by two policemen. The Police announced a reward of Rs 5000 for the arrests of these two persons. This announcement was proclaimed in Muzaffarpur town by drum beat throughout the night.⁶ The Police searched some Bengali houses and there was a strong rumour in the morning of 31 April that the houses of all Bengali houses would be searched. All routes were blocked and the Police officials were ready to catch Khudiram and Prafulla in all exit points. Every wayside station between Muzaffarpur and Mokamah and Pahleza Ghats were sealed. All trains leaving Muzaffarpur after the incident were thoroughly searched.

Khudiram and Prafulla had disappeared in the dark. Soon, they realised that if they escape together people could be suspicious. So, they decided to go in different directions. Prafulla Chaki moved towards Samastipur and Khudiram decided to follow the railway line towards Calcutta. The night escape of Khudiram was similar to that of his earlier escape to Medinipur after snatching a dak. But, this time he was in an area which was unknown to him and he did

not know the local language properly. So, his escape was a leap into dark. He had no real plan of escape to Calcutta.

The Police desperately looked for any clue. The Superintendent of Police sent two Sub-Inspectors – one towards Bankipore (Patna) and other towards Mokamah. The Police remained in high alert in all railway stations and was ordered to arrest anybody who could be even slightly suspected.⁷

Arrest of Prafulla Chaki

After being separated from Khudiram, Prafulla Chaki reached Samastipur station on 1 May, 1908. He took an inter class ticket for Mokamah Ghat. By now, he had purchased a new pair of shoes and a new set of clothes. Clearly, he had erred. He did not realise that his new clothes and new shoes would attract people's attention. Also, he should have realised that the Police would keep all station under surveillance. Had he been hiding somewhere for a few days things might have normalised and he could have escaped. But, that was not to be.

A Bengali Police Daroga Nandalal Banerjee was travelling to join his service at Singhbhoom. He was not on duty. Being a cunning Police officer he sensed quickly that the Bengali boy was a bit suspicious. He engaged Prafulla in conversation in Bengali. Unable to gauze the friendly advances of Nandalal, Prafulla became uncomfortable. That made Nandalal certain that this boy could be the man Police was frantically searching for. He sent an urgent telegram to the Police office of Muzaffarpur. The Police was ready to arrest Prafulla in the next station- Mokamah.⁸ After the train reached Mokamah, Nandalal Banerjee signalled and before Prafulla could do anything the Policemen caught him. A visibly shocked Prafulla shouted at the traitor Nandalal – “You are yourself a Bengali, still you get a Bengali caught like this !”. Bhupendra Kishore Ray wrote later- “The ignorant of this world, the boy (Prafulla) did not know that people like Nandalal do not belong to any nation. They are different. They are not Bengali, Indian or any other nation. They are only self serving ‘Vibhishan’ (traitors)... .”⁹

Prafulla was a young man of extraordinary physical strength. He pushed aside a policeman, freed himself and ran hard. Two constables followed him. Now, Prafulla fired. But, he had realised that he could not get away too far. He did not want to get arrested by the Police so he decided to shoot himself. He thus became “the first martyr of Bengal” and it happened at 4 pm in the evening of 1 May 1908. He kept the promise of not getting arrested by the enemy’s Police, much to the chagrin of the colonial Police force. In the discussion with Nandalal Banerjee, Prafulla Chaki had mentioned his name as Dinesh Chandra Ray. The insensitive Police force of colonial government did not hesitate to remove the head of “Dinesh” (Prafulla), pour it in spirit and send it to the Calcutta Police for identification. In a couple of days, it was confirmed that “Dinesh” was none other than Prafulla Kumar Chaki of Rangapur. Later, it was known that this extraordinary courageous young man was a well known and widely loved boy of Rangapur National School. He was inspired by the famous revolutionary Barin Ghosh who had been to Rangapur when Prafulla came into his contact. Later, he came to Calcutta where he was given the responsibility of killing Kingsford.

Arrest of Khudiram

Khudiram followed railway track after throwing the bomb with the hope that he would catch any train bound to Calcutta. He reached Waini station, 20 miles away from Muzaffarpur. He had travelled this distance barefooted. In the morning of 1st May, at around 8 in the morning, he reached a market near the station very hungry, thirsty and exhausted. He bought baked rice (*Chirre*) and ate. Then, he proceeded towards a tube-well to have some water. Here the police descended on him. They asked him many questions and Khudiram realised the gravity of situation. He tried to escape but the thin built exhausted young man of 18 years could not free himself from the policemen. He tried to take out his revolver from his pocket to fire but failed to do so as he was very tightly held. He was searched and two revolvers and some cartridges were found in his pockets.

By this time, the news of the capture of man who had thrown bomb in Muzaffarpur on Englishmen spread like wildfire. People were dying to see the face of the man who had dared to kill an Englishmen. When people saw the



Defiant Khudiram Bose after his arrest

innocent face of this lanky Midnapore boy in an exhausted state in the Police custody they were unable to comprehend how this young boy could do that! But, when this boy entered the Police van he shouted with passion- *Bande Mataram* ! This moment onwards, this boy had become a symbol of protest against the British rule in the hearts of millions of people.¹⁰

With the arrest of Khudiram and the death of Prafulla Chaki the government was not sure that the trouble was over. The information that these two boys had stayed there before the bomb throwing incident for three weeks was good enough reason for the police authorities to assume that some more revolutionaries might be hiding in the city. They suspected all Bengalis of the town. A list of Bengalis living in the town was prepared, their houses were searched and even on slightest doubt they arrested them. The panic was so pronounced that the District Magistrate imposed a censorship upon all telegraphic messages.¹¹ They had suspected that certain code words were being used in the communication between the revolutionaries in Calcutta and the revolutionaries hiding in Muzaffarpur. The panic among the Britishers can be gauged by the nervousness shown by them in an European club when a soda water bottle burst out. After this "great confusion prevailed for sometime, Europeans fleeing helter and skelter."¹²

In this phase, indiscriminate arrests and detentions were made

by the Government. Even a respectable Bengali clerk like Krishna Mohan Banerjee was arrested on suspicion. A historian who had closely followed the reporting in the contemporary newspapers summed up this panic situation in these words: “No Bengali was to be allowed to go to Sekandarabad *maidan* after sunset. A Bengali clerk who had gone to Silaut to entrain some relation of his was detained there for the whole night by the police and station staff on the ground that they had orders not to permit Bengalis to go to Muzaffarpur in night time. In other parts of Bihar also strict vigilance was kept on itinerant Bengalis. One Chandrasekhar Bhar was arrested at Gaya on suspicion of belonging to the party of bomb makers. ... some students of Calcutta Presidency College, who had gone on an educational tour to Chaibasa were placed under police surveillance.”¹³

Even months after the arrest of Khudiram Bose the Bengalis were seen with so much suspicion that a Bengali gentleman was detained at Bankipur while he was on his way to his Chittagong home. He was detained in Gulzarbagh Jail for about a fortnight.¹⁴ There are, however, some indications that these revolutionaries had got some sympathy and support from the people of that region. Prafulla Chaki had visited Bankipur, Dhaniapahari, Deoghar and some other places. It is important to note that they had stayed in Muzaffarpur for more than three weeks. Even after the bomb episode Prafulla was given shelter by Triguna Charan Ghosh, a railway employee of Samastipur. A historian had noted that “The C. I. D. officer who had followed Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki from Calcutta to Muzaffarpur returned from there with a letter from Armstrong, Superintendent of police, that the two revolutionaries had not arrived at Muzaffarpur, although the occurrence took place only six hours after his departure. All this suggest that the revolutionaries had succeeded to some extent in securing local sympathy.”¹⁵ Kingsford got so frightened by these developments that to save his life he took a long leave and left his place to hide himself and his family in a distant place in Mussorie. Thereafter, nothing significant was heard about him in the administrative circles.

Hearing on Khudiram Case

Hearing on Khudiram case began after three weeks. In the

court Khudiram said that he had tried to kill Kingsford because he was among the most unjust British men. He admitted that he did throw the bomb with the understanding that Kingsford was in that carriage. He expressed sorrow for two innocent women who died due to this. He kept on repeating this in his statements in the court in a dignified voice.¹⁶

His lawyer- Kalidas Basu was a very noble soul. He was a reputed lawyer of Muzaffarpur. He wanted to save the life of the young boy. He took no professional fee from his client. He advised Khudiram not to take the responsibility of bomb throwing. Khudiram refused to do that. But, once he came to know about the death of Prafulla he followed his lawyer's advice. Kalidas babu then tried to argue that the bomb was actually thrown by Prafulla Chaki. He also got a mercy petition signed by Khudiram by using all his persuasion power. He even tried to convince Khudiram that if he be released he would be able to do more service to the nation. Khudiram was not convinced but he signed only to please his lawyer¹⁷ who was doing all he could to save his life.

It can be said that all through the court trial beginning from 25 May till his execution in August Khudiram was a great symbol of revolutionary courage who cared little for his own life. Various details of his behaviour and utterances clearly testify this. In this hearing he was not apologetic at all and, he took the full responsibility of bomb throwing. He added that he was unhappy over this fact that a person like Kingsford was still alive! During this hearing, it was found, this boy had gained 2 pounds weight!

It was during the court proceedings which started on 9 June onwards that the boldness and conviction of this frail looking young boy from Medinipur really caught the attention of all those who had the fortune to see him or know about how he conducted himself. He was selfless and not afraid of death. His conviction that this land must be freed and all those who come in the way of revolutionaries, who love their motherland the way a child loves his mother, be eliminated, was so great that his every uttering in the court became benchmarks of bravery and love for the motherland.

On 13 June, 1908 his case was heard with two assesses- Babu Nathuni Prasad and Babu Janak Prasad. Both of them found Khudiram guilty.

The Judge later recollected that the judgement that he would be hanged till death created no visible impression on his face. So immune Khudiram was from the proceedings that he was found sleeping while the court proceedings were on.¹⁸

Even after the final judgement when the judge noticed that Khudiram was showing no expression on his face he asked him a few questions which became most cited conversation of Khudiram with his judge:

“Judge: Have you understood the judgement?

Khudiram: Yes.

J: Appeal should be made in 7 days’ time.

K: I want to say something.

J: There is no time for it. I do not want it.

K: If given chance, I would have given description about how the bomb was made.

J: Take the convict to jail!”¹⁹

On the day before his execution, Khudiram had told lawyers: “Do not worry. In old days Rajput women used to jump into the fire to accept death without any fear. I will also accept my death without any fear.”²⁰

The stories of how boldly one faces death are considered a yardstick to know the quality of a man. Khudiram Bose’s fearlessness was pronounced in all his deeds before he was executed. A newspaper *The Empire* wrote: “Khudiram Bose was executed this morning;... it is alleged that he mounted the scaffold with his body erect. He was cheerful and smiling.”

He said to his lawyer on 11 June, 1908, when it was clear that he was to be hanged sooner or later- “I am a man from Medinipur. My father, mother, brother, uncle, auntie all have passed away. No one is alive except my elder sister whose son is of my age.”

Khudiram's answers to questions put before him were widely reported as heroic defence of a young revolutionary. On 18th June, 1908, *Sanjivani* published 'Khudiram's bold answers' in which this was cited :

“Question: Do you want to see anyone?

Khudiram: Yes ! I want to see Medinipur once. *Didi* (elder sister) and her son also.

Q: Any regret?

K: No.”

Khudiram's case was also brought at Calcutta High Court. The attempt was made to save his life. Sadly, except Narendra Kumar Basu no Bengali lawyer came forward to plead his case as there was none who could pay the fees for Khudiram.²¹ The hearing on Khudiram at Calcutta High Court began on 8 July, 1908. On 13 July, the Court decreed that the order of Muzaffarpur Court was not to be changed.²²

The Execution of Khudiram

The boy revolutionary was to be hanged on 11 August, 1908 at 6 in the morning. Upendra Nath Sen, then a correspondent of *Bengalee* newspaper, has given the details of the day on which Khudiram was executed. A 15 feet high execution podium was erected. Khudiram had requested somebody to bring *charanamrit* from a temple which he had before moving towards the podium. There are some stories related to this morning's activities of Khudiram. One interesting story which had been published and circulated was that Khudiram was asked about his last wish. He told that he wanted to have mango before execution. Some mangoes were arranged for him. The policeman returned after some time to take him to the podium. He found that mangoes were still there. The policeman asked Khudiram why he did not eat them. Khudiram replied that he had already eaten them. The policeman was amused and he picked up a mango only to find that the boy was right. He had, after eating the mangoes carefully, kept them in such a way

that gave the impression that they were intact. Clearly the boy had tried to tease the policeman on the day when he was to be executed!

Whether this story is historically correct or not can be debated but it must be said that Khudiram was not afraid of death. Upendra Nath Sen's vivid account testify that. He died almost immediately after he was hanged.

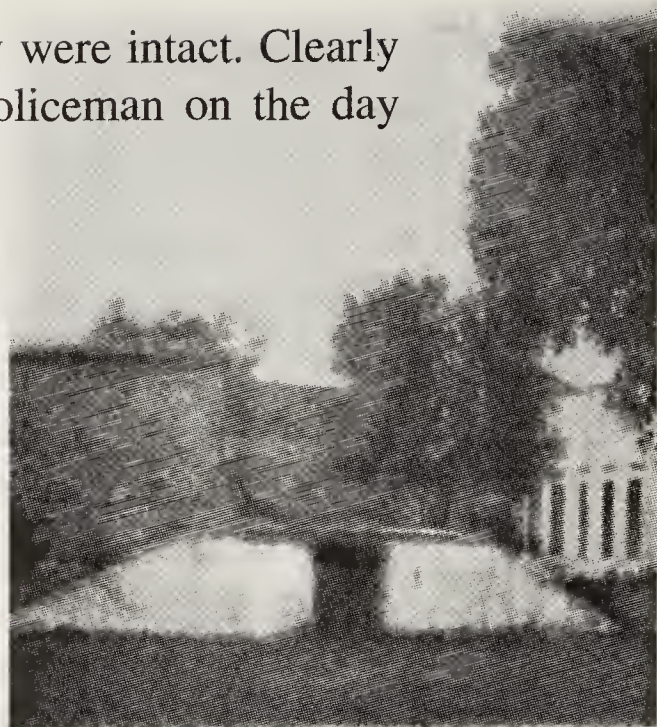
His dead body was claimed by some local Bengalis who took it to the cremation ghat. A procession

followed his last journey. Those who had assembled there were overwhelmed with emotions. Upendra Nath Sen has mentioned that while he was pouring water on the ashes of Khudiram a piece of burnt wood touched his chest leaving a scar. The biographer of Khudiram envied Sen for this sign of his association with Khudiram!²³

Khudiram was a hero for thousands of Indians. In Calcutta, his execution was mourned by thousands. On 11 August, 1908 students of schools and colleges attended classes barefooted. Most of the students of Presidency and General Assembly College (later Scottish Church College) came to their colleges in mourning dress. Hindu School's students also came barefooted. Many young men took vegetarian food on that day.

Sanjivani summed up the pride in Khudiram's act by saying that, "Khudiram was the first Bengali who attempted to kill a *Rajpurush* (British)."

So powerful was the impact of Khudiram on his sympathisers that Upen babu refused to be present at the time of his execution. He was broken. He, however, made arrangements for the last rites of Khudiram. After few months, he saw Khudiram in his dream. At that time his wife was expecting. Later, when his child was born



The place where Khudiram Bose embraced the gallows

he had a mark on his neck resembling the mark of execution *dori* (rope). It was taken as the rebirth of Khudiram. The child could survive only for three years.²⁴

While Khudiram's trial was on, a lady, Sudhansu Bala Sarkar²⁵, visited Muzaffarpur to see him. Possibly the lady wanted to see the remarkable boy revolutionary of Midnapore.

Fate of the Traitor

Daroga Nandalal Banerjee who had been instrumental in getting Prafulla Chaki arrested was hoping that he would get promotions after promotions for his loyalty to the government. In recognition of his loyalty to the government he was awarded 1000 rupees by Government at a Durbar in Muzaffarpur on 10 May, 1908. He, however, was declared a traitor by the revolutionaries and he was to get his due.

Soon after the arrest and death of Prafulla Nandalal Banerjee and his family was targeted by the revolutionaries. His grandfather Shib Chunder Chatterjee, a government pleader, received anonymous letter which threatened that "his tenure of life would be determined by a bomb". This letter also declared that "the suicide of ...(Prafulla Chaki) would be expiated by a slaughter of three hundred Europeans for every Bengali life taken."²⁶

Nandalal Banerjee came to Calcutta and he was putting up with a relative at 100/2, Serpentine Lane. On 9 November, 1908, he left the house between 7 and 7.30 p.m. for posting a letter. He was hit by a bullet or two. He fell down. Then a man reached there and he fired two more shots on his body.²⁷ No arrests were made and the assailants were able to go scot-free. Later, it was believed that he was killed by a revolutionary Sirish Chandra Pal. This was possible as there were close contacts and collaborations between Bipin Babu's Atmonnati Samiti and Hem Chandra Ghosh's Mukti Sangha of Dacca. Sirish Chandra was the Calcutta representative of Hemchandra. In this daring action Sirish Chandra was helped by Ranendra Nath Ganguli. About this historian Uma Mukherjee has written: "...At the appointed hour Ranen and Naren (Sirish Pal) set

out and waited before the old Shiva temple cracking and taking ground nuts, and shortly after finding Nandalal Banerjee coming out of his house they moved forward. It was Naren (Srish Pal) who actually killed Nandalal just as the S.W. corner of St. James Park at about 7 p.m. To be sure of the accomplished murder Ranen had struck the head of the man with his own revolver.”²⁸

After killing Nandalal Banerjee these two revolutionaries disappeared and their whereabouts remained a subject of mystery for not only the police but also for the revolutionary organisations. There were many stories circulated about this killing but this was the true story, claims a revolutionary and a chronicler Rakshit Ray.²⁹ It was a matter of great pride for revolutionaries that the traitor was punished in two months and eight days after he had helped the police in arresting Prafulla Chaki.

The case of Maharaja Rameshwar Singh of Darbhanga is also interesting. The Maharaja had condemned the acts of Khudiram and Prafulla. He was sent threatening letters by revolutionaries. To remain safe the Maharaja decided to defer his journey to Simla.³⁰

Impact of Khudiram's Daring Act

Khudiram's arrest, his in court behaviour and show of courage and conviction at the time of mounting the scaffold had made him an icon in the contemporary Bengal. To get an idea of how he had caught the imagination of rural Bengali psyche only one example would suffice. In February 1910 a *dhoti* was brought into notice of the government officials on which a highly inspiring poem was written. This song immortalised Khudiram and his spirit. The *dhoti* was 5 yards long and the whole border was covered by the poem. The price of this *dhoti* was Rs 4.³¹ To realise the poetic force behind this immortal song it should be read in original Bengali but even a rough translation is good enough to realise how the people of rural Bengal identified with the spirit of Khudiram.

The song writer is not known and perhaps never be known. There are people who believe that it was written by Khudiram himself . It is highly unlikely but the identification of this song with what Khudiram did and thought is so complete that to know him

one must remember this song. The substance of this song rendered in English is as follows:

*Mother, farewell,
I shall go to the gallows, with a smile
The people of India will see this.
One bomb can kill a man.
There are lakhs of bombs in our homes.
Mother, what can the English do? If I come back
Do not forget, Mother,
Your foolish child Khudiram.
See that I get you sacred feet at the end.
What shall I call you again "Mother" with the case of my
mind?
Mother, do not keep this sinner in another country.
It is written that you have 36 crores of sons and daughters.
Mother, Khudiram's name vanishes now.
He is now turned to dust.
If I have to rise again,
See that Mother, I sit on your lap again.
In this kingdom of Bhisma who else is there like you?
You are unparalleled Mother
When shall I depart from this world with a shout of Bande
Mataram?
This is the saying of Bhabataran
Farewell, Mother,*

*I shall go to the gallows with a smile.*³² This short translation was done by K. K. Datta.

In Bengali the poetic force is overwhelming which gets lost in the English translation. To realize the power of this song it is imperative to read it in Bengali:

Ek bar biday de ma, ghure aashi.
 Aami hasi hasi porbo phansi,
 Dekhabe Bharat-basi.
 Kaler Boma tore kore
 Dariye chhila rashtar dhare, ma go,
 Baro lat ke marte giye, ma
 Marlam aar ek England basi.
 Hathe jodi thakto chhora,
 Tor Khudi ki porto dhora?
 Rakta
 –Ganga boye jeto, ma,
 Dekhto jagat basi
 Thakato jodi tottughora,
 Tor Khudi ki porto dhora?
 O ma, ek chabuke chole jetam
 Gaya Ganga Kashi.
 Shanibar bela dus ta pare,
 Judge Korte te lok na dhore, ma go,
 Holo abhiramer deep chalan, ma,
 Khudiramer Phansi
 Baro lakkhe tettrish koti,
 Roelo ma tor beta beti, ma go,
 Tader niye ghor korish ma,
 Moder karish dasi.
 Kanher basan kanher choori
 Poro na ma, bilayati sari,
 O ma , moner dukkho mone I roi lo,
 Ho lo na aamar swadeshi.
 Dus mas dus din pore

Janma nebo mashir ghore, ma go,

It is still debated who had written this immortal song which summed up the great story of Khudiram in a better way than any historical account. According to a scholar, Sudhir Chakrabarty, the man who had originally composed this song was a singer called Pitambar Das.³³

Khudiram, Prafulla Chaki and the Contemporary Press reaction

The Muzaffarpur Bomb case became a very hot subject of discussion in the contemporary Indian press. A number of Bengali papers “generally agreed to cast the whole responsibility upon an alien government whose resistance to their national aspirations goaded impatient patriotism to these extremes.”³⁴

The most important reaction came from distant Maharashtra in the pages of *Mahratta* and *Kesari* in May and June 1908.

Some passages are worth citing here to appreciate the spirit of the great leader Bal Gangadhar Tilak. He wrote, “(in the act of bomb throwing) there was not the shadow of self interest which is the usual motive of crimes... there is no private grudge, no mean spite, no sordid revengefulness against any individual. The confessions made appear on their face to be straight forward and honest; and they prove that the boys were guided by the sole consideration of the futility of the ordinary methods of political agitation and the irresistible desire to make terrible protest against the existing state of things so far as lay in their power, and ...the remote possibility lies on the head of the Government itself.”³⁵

Two days later Tilak wrote in *Kesari*, “The desire of people gradually to obtain the rights of *Swarajya* is growing stronger and stronger and if they do not get rights by degrees, as desired by them, then some people at least out of the subject population being filled with indignation or exasperation will not fail to embark upon the commission of improper horrible deeds recklessly.” In the same article he added, “All thoughtful people seem to have formed one opinion that the bomb party has come into existence in consequence of the oppression practiced by the official class, the harassment

inflicted by them and their obstinacy in treating public opinion with recklessness. The bombs exploded owing to the official class having tried the patience of the Bengalees to such a degree that the heads of the Bengalee youths become turned. The responsibility of this calamity must, therefore, be thrown not on the political agitation, writing and speeches, but on the thoughtlessness and obstinacy of the official class."

"... Government have tasted, in the shape of bombs, the bitter fruits of that policy of repression that has been continuously maintained by them for the last ten years on account of their being half influenced by the imputations."³⁶

Tilak argued that, "The Bengal bomb makers have themselves admitted that the English Government can not be overthrown by the bomb...things must be viewed from the peoples' stand point." Clearly, Tilak was of the opinion that these revolutionaries were expressing popular mood and if the government did not pay attention to the popular discontentment the consequences would be disastrous. He said clearly, "If Government do not change ...policy at this time, its consequence will not fail to be even more terrible than at present.... Rulers who exercise unrestricted power must always remember that there is also a limit to the patience of humanity."³⁷

The magnitude of Khudiram Bose's bomb throwing incident can also be understood by proud Maratha leader's comparison between the act of a Bengali young revolutionary and Maratha revolutionary Chapekar brothers. He wrote, "If daring and skill in execution are to be considered, the Chapekar brothers must be accorded the palm over the bomb throwers (Khudiram and Prafulla) of Bengal, but from the point of view of the motive and the means used, the latter deserve the greater praise...Modern military science has strength and position of the rulers in all countries has improved the placing the subjects totally at a disadvantage. But, if modern science has placed deadly arms of precision in the hands of the rulers, it has also given birth to the destructive bombs... If Government does not profit by bombs, it will prove to be its own enemy."³⁸

On the government's contention that the cult of the bomb in

Bengal is destructive of social order, *Kesari* reacted rather boldly, “The English have evidently emasculated the whole nation and reduced it to a state of impotence simply to enable even the lowest of the officials to exercise their high handed sway with impunity. The English possess neither the magnanimity nor the power of the Mughals who never disarmed the Indians.... As compared to the Imperial sway of the Mughuls, the English Empire in India is extremely weak and wanting in vigour... If the English army in India were to be confronted by difficulties similar to those which Aurangzeb’s forces encountered then the English rule will not last even quarter of a century after (that). The principal reason of this is that the English remain in India like temporary tenants or mere birds of passage.”³⁹ For two articles in the *Kesari* published in May and June 1908 in connection with the Muzaffarpur killings he was convicted and sentenced to six years’ imprisonment.

Another important reaction came from Paranjape in the pages of *Kal*. This paper wrote, “It is quite unjustifiable to call the bomb throwers in India anarchists. Setting aside the question whether bomb throwing was justifiable or not, Indians are not trying to promote disorder but to obtain *Swarajya*.” He wrote on 8 May, 1908 that there could be no effect without a cause and the Indians must have been give sufficient incitement “to resort to violent means.”⁴⁰ He was convicted in July 1908 for his article on this.

Jugantar summed up the mood of contemporary revolutionaries and dared to call upon the people to loot the treasuries and in the name of *Chamunda nrimunda-malini karal badani Kali* to engage in war with the enemy.⁴⁰ On 20 May, this paper wrote, “the country is impatient to take vengeance on the traitors. The hour of vengeance is come and those who gave the police information and even those who may be mistaken for the traitors would suffer. The *shashtras* say: Be he brother, or father or son, kill him if he be a traitor; there is no sin in it.” This paper was in full support for the act of Khudiram and Prafulla Chaki and it declared it no uncertain terms that this bomb throwing act had served its purpose. It wrote, “The handful of police and soldiers will never be able to withstand

this ocean of revolutionists. ... A single frown (a few bombs) from your eyes have struck terror into the heart of the foe! The uproar of panic has filled the sky!"

There are some more examples that the government was not ready to tolerate anything which could be considered sympathetic to Khudiram and Prafulla Chaki and their cause. Shanti Narain was sentenced to a long term of imprisonment for his article which was published in *Swarajya* of Allahabad.

In June 1908, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, then a radical young student of London University, gave a lecture at India House, London, justifying their use and explaining what ingredients were required for making bombs.⁴¹ Savarkar also wrote a pamphlet –*Bande Mataram* in praise of Dhingra and Khudiram Bose. This pamphlet strongly advocated political assassinations in India. It said: "Terrorise the officials, English and Indian, and the collapse of the whole machinery of oppression is not very far. The persistent execution of the policy that has been so gloriously inaugurated by Khudiram Bose, Kanai Lal Datta and other martyrs will soon cripple the British government in India. This campaign of separate assassinations is the best conceivable method of paralysing the bureaucracy and arousing the people. The initial stage of the revolution is marked by the policy of separate assassinations."⁴²

After Khudiram was executed some revolutionary activities intensified. On 31 August 1908, Satyendra Nath Bose and Kanai Lal Datt shot a traitor Narendra Nath Goswami in the Alipur Presidency Jail. Both these great revolutionaries were sentenced to death. They were executed on 21 and 10 November 1908 respectively.

NOTES

1. Nagendra Kumar Guha Ray, *Shahid Yugal*, p. 103.
2. Cited in *Early Phase of Revolutionary Movement*, p. 74.
3. K. C. Ghosh, p. 161.
4. In a communication of Calcutta Police record, dated 20 April, 1908 we find a letter which mentioned: "The C. I. O. Bengal have heard a rumour. It is pretty strong rumour, but there are absolutely no details and no facts, that a man probably a Bengali and probably a Bengali strong man left

- Calcutta.”(Cited in Chinmay Chatterjee, *Op. cit.*, p. 89.) The man referred as strong man was probably Prafulla Chaki.
5. Home Political (A) Proceedings, 11-150, May 1908, cited in Jata Shankar Jha, *Early Revolutionary Movement In Bihar* (Patna: K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1977), p. 63.
 6. *Ibid.*
 7. Kali Charan Ghosh, *Roll of Honour*, p. 163-64.
 8. *Roll of Honour*, p. 163.
 9. Bhupendra Kishore Rakshit Ray, *Bharate Sashastra Biplab* (Bengali), p. 53.
 10. *Ibid*, p. 55.
 11. *Ibid.*
 12. The Bihar Herald, May 1908, cited in *Early Revolutionary Movement*, p. 64.
 13. *Ibid*, pp. 64-65. Jata Shankar Jha has cited *The Bihar Herald*, 30 May, 6 June, 11 July, 1908.
 14. The Bihar Herald, 30 January, 1909, cited in *Early Revolutionary Movement*, p. 65.
 15. *Early Revolutionary Movement*, pp. 66-67.
 16. *Roll of Honour*, p. 166, cited in *Bharate Sashastra Biplab*, p. 55.
 17. Nagendra Kumar Guha Ray, *Op. cit.*, p. 128.
 18. Nagendra Kumar Guha Ray, *Op. cit.*, p. 119.
 19. *Ibid.*, p. 121.
 20. *Roll of Honour*, p. 166, cited in *Bharate Sashastra Biplab*, p. 57.
 21. Nikhilesh Ray Chaudhru, *Op. cit.*
 22. *Ibid.*
 23. Nagendra Kumar Guha Ray has given a moving account of the day of Khudiram’s execution. He has based this account on Upendra Nath Sen’s accounts. Many years later when he met Sen and found that ‘sacred scar’ on his chest he envied that Sen’s body had that ‘sacred scar’. (See Nagendra Kumar Guha Ray, *Op. cit.*,p. 133).
 24. *Ibid*, p. 138.
 25. This lady’s surprise visit was taken by the police seriously. She was brought to Midnapore from Calcutta by sub-manager of the Raja of Narajole. Thereafter she was in contact with some locally influential men. At last, she married Upendra Nath Sarkar, brother of Miss Bose, lady doctor of the Midnapore Charitable Dispensary. The reasons of her going from Midnapore to Muzaffarpur was a matter of suspicion for the Police department. (See the report of Inspector Lal Mohan Guha of Midnapore, in *Midnapore Conspiracy Case*, p. 25).
 26. The Behar Herald, 23 May, 1908, cited in *Early Phase of Revolutionary Movement*, p. 67.
 27. K. C. Ghosh, *The Roll of Honour*, pp. 202-203.

28. Uma Mukherjee, *Two Great Indian Revolutionaries*, p. 231.
29. *Bharate Sashastra Biplab*, p. 59.
30. The Behar Herald, 27 June, 1908, cited in *Early Phase of Revolutionary Movement*, p. 67.
31. Home Political (A) Proceedings Nos. 112-150, May 1908. See *Early Phase of Revolutionary Movement*, pp. 65-66.
32. *Takhan chinte jodi na paris, ma, Dekhabe galay Phansi*. (Chinmay Chatterjee, *Op. cit.* pp. 91-92).
33. He has cited Ranajit Singh, *Matir Surer Khoje*, Pratikshan Prakashan, as his source of information. Not much is known about this singer who immortalized Khudiram in the public memory of Bengal.
34. Valentine Chirol, *Indian Unrest*, p. 96.
35. Tilak in his article argued that ,” Owing to the murders of 1897, the attention of the authorities was directed towards the disorder (in) plague (administration); and since that time the aspect of the plague administration began to change and complete transformation took place in the plague administration soon after.”
36. *Kesari*, 26 May, 1908, cited in K. C. Ghosh, *The Roll Of Honour* (Calcutta: Vidya Bharati, 1965), p. 176-77. For more reports from the contemporary newspapers see *Mumukshu*, 14 May, 1908, *The Hind Punch*, 13 May, 1908, *Swarajya*, 16 May, 1908, *Dhyannottejak*, 16 May, 1908, *Bhala*, 17 May, 1908, *Gujarati*, 17 May, 1908, *Sudhakar*, 16 May, 1908, *Vihari*, 18 May, 1908, *Yugantar*, 5 May, 1908 and other papers. A very good collection of these views are available in K. C. Ghosh, *Op. cit.*, pp. 170-79.
37. *Kesari*, 27 May, 1908, cited in K. C. Ghosh, *Op. cit.*, p. 178-79.
38. *Kesari*, 9 June, 1908, cited in K. C. Ghosh, *Op. cit.*, p. 175.
39. Cited in K. C. Ghosh, *Op. cit.*, p. 171.
40. See *Jugantar*, 5 May, 1908, cited in K. C. Ghosh, *Op. Cit.*, p. 173.
41. *Sedition Committee, 1918, Report* (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1918), p. 6.
42. *Ibid*, p. 8.

The Legacy of Khudiram

Khudiram's act of throwing bomb should be seen as the outcome of a process in which thousands of young men were involved. Khudiram Bose should be seen as the most famous of these great young revolutionaries. His act must not be seen in isolation. The police records also confirmed that his act was following revolutionary programmes. It had recorded that, " The Muzaffarpur murder case which occurred on 30/4/08 was the outcome of the conspiracy got up in the Midnapore town on the 30th March, 1908.... The revolver with which accused Khudiram Bose went armed to assassinate Mr Kingsford, was in the possession of the said Satyendra Nath Bose on 24th January, 1908."¹

Many other revolutionaries were executing plans of killing British officials and dishonest Indians to convey that British and its supporters were under physical threat in this country. Another man followed the example of Khudiram in less than a month's time when on 29th May an attempt was made to take the life of the then session judge of Midnapore by throwing a bomb on him while he was driving from the club to his residence. The judge was accompanied by C. T. Brett, ASP Midnapore.

Khudiram's story is a slice of a big story of young revolutionaries who had been very active at least since 1907 days. Many of these revolutionaries are not well known or remembered, but their inspiring stories are worth remembering. Two other names which should come to our attention are related with Satyendra Nath Bose and Kanai Lal Dutta. Both of them stirred contemporary Bengali society by their courage and selfless emotion for their motherland. The government officials found themselves unable to explain the popularity of these heroes.²

The popularity of revolutionaries in Bengal was summed up aptly by Annie Besant when she said in her Congress speech, "When the editor of an extremist newspaper (*Jugantar*) was

prosecuted for sedition, convicted and sentenced, 500 Bengali women went to his mother to show their sympathy, not by condolences, but by congratulations. Such was the feeling of the well born women of India.”³ In those days “the murderer was canonised. Not a word of sympathy was vouchsafed to the relations of the victims. *Jugantar*, and *Sandhya* newspapers and numerous pamphlets distributed broadcast clamoured for the punishment of the traitors to the country,” complained a government report.⁴

Khudiram was hanged in the morning of 11 August, 1908. This event came at a time when the euphoria of 1905 partition days had gone. It was a period in which the Indian National Congress had been divided ideologically and organisationally. The division of extremist and moderate wings of the Congress proved demoralising for people. In this period of less and less organised political activities it was the revolutionary movement which showed the path and hope to our freedom movement. Historians of our national movement should give credit to these selfless revolutionaries for their love and sacrifice for motherland. The stories of these heroes were great inspiration for millions of people throughout India. People might not have come into open to appreciate their deeds but these revolutionaries were loved and revered in all corners of this country. In this tradition of revolutionaries two most remarkable symbols are two duos: Khudiram Bose-Prafulla Chaki and Bhagat Singh-Chandrasekhar Azad. It is interesting to note that both Khudiram and Bhagat Singh were executed and Prafulla Chaki and Azad shot themselves to prevent their arrests.

It would be unfair to put the sacrifices of Ramprasad Bismil, Sukhdev, Rajguru, Phadke, Sohan Lal Pathak, Roshan Singh, Baikunth Sukul, Gendalal Dixit, Udham Singh, Sita Ram Raju, Madan Lal Dhingra, Chapekar brothers- Damodar, Balkrishna and Basudev, Harnam Singh, Anantlakshan Kanhere, Ashfaqullah, Kanailal Datta, Kartar Singh, Bishnu Ganesh Pingle, Amichand, Abodh Bihari, Yatindra Nath Mukherjee, Chittapriya Raychaudhuri, Jyotish Pal, Nalini Bagchi, Surya Sen, Pritilata, Kanai Bhattacharya, Binay-Badal-Dinesh, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Rajendra Lahiri and hundreds of other great revolutionaries to a lesser pedestals, but, somehow these three

names- Khudiram, Bhagat Singh and Chandra Shekhar Azad have symbolised the strength and appeal of the revolutionary movement more than other names.

The appeal of these revolutionaries has not lessened even today and people remember them fondly after many decades. The respect for these revolutionaries in the popular memory has been pronounced. The statues of these heroes are found in greatest numbers even where they had never gone or worked. It is significant to note that even in places where revolutionaries like Khudiram had no direct association we come across a number of public places named after him. Even in 1980s, some seven decades after the execution of Khudiram, a famous playground was named after Khudiram at Monghyr, a town of Bihar. Khudiram had never gone to this town. Still, people of this town had so much respect for Khudiram. Such respect and reverence for this remarkable young man bears testimony that how he is loved even after so many decades. The number of statues of Khudiram in the streets of Bengal and elsewhere would be considerable. Most of these have been erected not by the government but by local initiatives and resources.



Statue of Khudiram Bose in Muzaffarpur, Bihar: Mute testimony of his exemplary courage

Khudiram's Appeal

Khudiram's sacrifice brought great pride for millions of Indians in general and Bengalis in particular. For the Bengalis "it was a matter of great pride that it was after all a Bengali who had the courage to lay down his life in performing such a daring deed." For all nationalists he became a hero, a martyr and a perennial source of inspiration. As a tribute to Khudiram's memory schools were closed for two or three days.⁵ A historian has mentioned that "his photographs had large sale, and gradually Bengali youths began to

use *dhotis* bearing the name of Khudiram Bose in the border. Thus it became a new method of disseminating revolutionary ideas among the people.”⁶

Khudiram’s appeal was not confined to Bengal and Maharashtra only. Even in northern India he was hailed as a great patriotic soul who sacrificed his life for arousing nationalist sentiments among his beloved countrymen. Consider this description of his last rites at the cremation ghat: “*asthi churna aur bhashma ke liye paraspar chheena jhapati hone lagi. Koi sone ki dibbi mein, koi chandi ke aur koi hathi dant ke chhote chhote dibbon mein wah punit bhshma bhar le gaye! Ek muthi bhashma ke liye hazaron stri-purusha pramatta ho uthe the. Khudiram ne apni jan par khelkar is prakar Bharat janani par apni bhakti shraddhanjali arpit ki. Bhagwan is punyatma ko shanti pradan kare!* [there was a chaos for collecting the sacred ashes of Khudiram. Thousands of people were dying to collect the sacred ashes in their little containers of gold, silver and ivory. Khudiram had played with his life to show his love and devotion for his motherland. May the almighty bless peace to his soul].”⁷ These lines speak of writers and editor’s appreciation of Khudiram’s sacrifice as this was being written in a magazine which was “highly appreciated and recommended for use in Schools and Libraries by Directorate of Public Instruction, Punjab, Central Provinces and Berar, United Provinces and Kashmir State etc. etc.”

As long as the story of young revolutionary movement would remain the inspiring tale of Khudiram Bose would be there to inspire millions of people who take pride in self less service and sacrifice for their motherland.

NOTES

1. Midnapore Conspiracy Case, p. 39.
2. A Commissioner of Police wrote on 3 December, 1908, three weeks after the execution of Kanai Lal Dutta that, “ the picture taken after the execution of Kanai Lal Dutta is now being sold in the streets of Calcutta.” Another report mentioned that, “ photos of Kanai were selling like wildfire.” For many more examples of overwhelming response of Bengalis

over these young heroes see I. B. file 4/138 C/1908, no. 24/1908, pp. 3-14, B S A.

3. A Note by Mr N. Gupta, C I E, on the Difficulties Experienced in the Prosecution of Cases Relating to the Revolutionary Movement (1905-16), B S A, p.2.
4. *Ibid*, p. 3.
5. K. K. Datta, *Freedom Movement in Bihar* Vol I, p. 115, cited in *Early Phase of Revolutionary Movement*, p. 65.
6. *Early Phase of Revolutionary Movement*, p. 65.
7. Sharada Prasadji Bhandari, 'Khudiram Bose', *Chand: Phansi Ank*, November, 1928.

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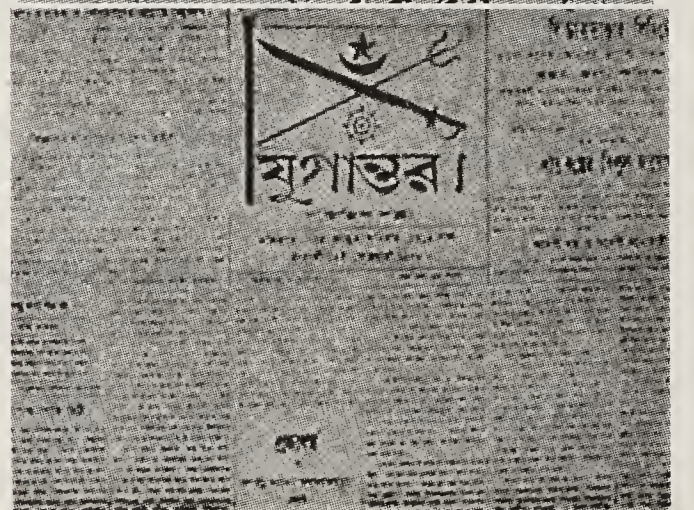
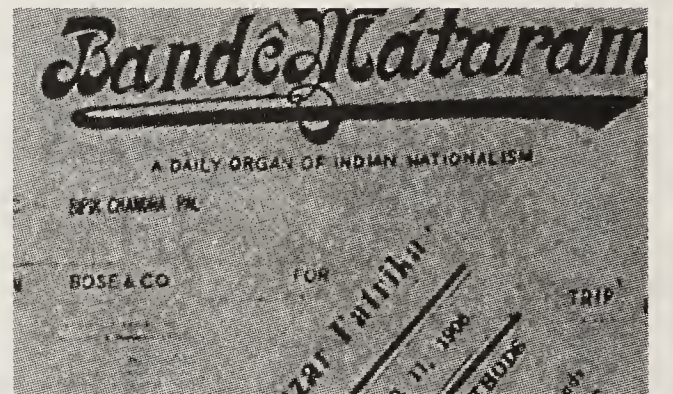
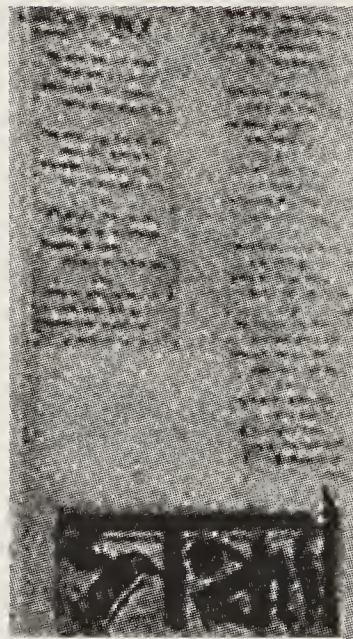
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*Jabe jabe jiban chale
Jagat majhe tomar kaje
'Bande Mataram' bole
Bet mere ki ma bholabi
Amra ki mayer sei chhele?*



Appendix

Khudiram Bose was hanged on 11th August 1908, hailed by the nation as a martyr who sacrificed himself for his motherland.

Below is the Judgement pronounced by Mr. C.M.W. Brett and Mr. A.E. Ryves, the Judges of the High Court of Calcutta on 13th July 1908:

On the night of 30 April last, at about half-past 8, Mrs. and Miss Kennedy were returning home in the dark from the Muzaffarpur station club. While going past the judge's house a bomb was thrown in their carriage and exploded—shattering the vehicle, sustaining injuries to the syce on the footboard and causing such frightful injuries to the unfortunate ladies that the younger one of them died within an hour of the accident and the other, seriously injured, in the morning of 2 May 1908. The theory of prosecution is that the bomb was intended for Mr. Kingsford, the District and Sessions Judge of Muzaffarpur, who had shortly before been transferred from the appointment of Chief Presidency Magistrate of Calcutta. The prisoner Khudiram Bose is standing charged with the murder, and I should have no hesitation in convicting the prisoner of murder on the circumstantial evidence, therefore, and agreeing with both assessors, I hereby do so.

The evidence had been discussed by the District Judge in his summing up of the case to the assessors, which summing up he asks in his judgement may be read as part of his judgement. In his judgement, he finds that the circumstantial evidence against the accused is overwhelming and fully established his guilt of the offense of murder and he says that he convicts the accused on that evidence. He adds that he sees no reason for doubting the

voluntary character of the confession made by the accused to the District Magistrate or of the plea of guilty made by the accused to the charge. He said:

The sentence of the Court is that the prisoner Khudiram Bose be hanged by the neck until he is dead.

Khudiram Bose subsequently appealed in the High Court of Calcutta against the Judgement of the Sessions Judge and pleaded for the retrial of the case on various grounds. The Judges of the High Court dealt with the various objections of the accused thoroughly and giving their opinion they said:

The circumstantial evidence against the accused in this case is overwhelming and is in our opinion consistent only with the conclusion that the accused committed the offence with which he was charged. However improper some of the questions may have been, it is in our opinion clear that the whole examination cannot be rejected as inadmissible and it is unfortunate that owing to the method adopted by the judge of incorporating his summing up into his judgment it is not clear how much he accepted. It is evident from the proceedings before the Sessions Judge that the appellant made no effort to dispute the truth of the case for the prosecution or to deny his guilt or that he was present at the scene of the murder.

The evidence for the prosecution stands practically unchallenged at the trial and in the course of this appeal, except the evidence of the coachman. As to the evidence of this witness we see no reason to differ from the conclusion of the Sessions Court that it may be accepted so far as the identification of the accused as the man who threw the bomb is concerned. His first statement taken immediately after the excitement of the occurrence when he must have been suffering from terror and excitement cannot be relied on implicitly. The second statement was made before the accused

III

was brought in under arrest and we think it may be accepted. As regards the identification of the accused we think we should hesitate to differ from the finding of the District Judge who had the witness before him and saw his demeanour under examination.

At the time of the occurrence the lamps of the carriage were alight and it was certainly possible to see distinctly the face of a person approaching the carriage especially as the evidence to the effect is that the accused's head was uncovered.

Apart from the evidence of this witness, however, we have it proved that prior to the occurrence the accused and his companion were staying in Muzaffarpur for no ostensible object and that the accused gave a false description of himself. On the night of the occurrence the accused and his companion were seen loitering near the scene or occurrence an hour before the murder. Two men were seen to run up to the carriage when the bomb was thrown and two figures were seen running away from the scene of occurrence. Afterwards also, two men were seen running to the *dharamshala* whose description tallied with that of the accused and his companion. Two pair of shoes, one pair belonging to each of them, were found close to the scene of the murder.

After the murder, the accused and his companion fled in different directions leaving the room in the *dharamshala* locked with their things in it. The accused was arrested 25 miles off the next morning. He was armed with two revolvers and was carrying loose cartridges. He attempted to escape at the time of his arrest. Round his body were found a striped coat and a white coat similar to those which he and his companion were wearing before the occurrence. Close to the scene of occurrence was found a tin box which corresponded with the marks in the cotton

IV

wool in the bag belonging to the two men found in the *dharamshala* and which, as it had evidently been carried with care, presumably contained the bomb with which the murder was committed.

The accused's companion was arrested two days afterwards dressed in new clothes and shoes and after he had tried to escape and shoot one of his captors, he committed suicide. Some of the spare cartridges that were found with the accused fitted the pistol with which Dinesh Chandra Roy shot himself. These facts combined, make out against the accused a very strong case and are in our opinion consistent with the one view only, namely that he committed the murder as charged.

In his petition of appeal too there is no denial of his guilt or at least of his being implicated in the crime. In the first ground he says that he made his statement to the DM in order to save Dinesh Chandra Roy as he had been instructed by that person and in the remaining grounds he suggests that burdened as he was with two pistols and other articles and ignorant as he was of how to use a pistol or to throw a bomb, interests with this Court to consider whether the bomb was thrown by him or Dinesh Chandra Roy. [sic]

In the last ground he suggests that Dinesh Chandra committed suicide only because he was absolutely guilty or he threw the bomb. He and Dinesh went that night with the intention of committing murder by means of the bomb and if in prosecution of this common object the accused stood by and held the heavy articles and the coat of Dinesh so as to facilitate the commission of the offence by Dinesh and to assist his escape afterwards, and if Dinesh threw the bomb, the accused would be equally guilty with Dinesh of committing the offence of murder (Section 34 I.P.C.).

The first object of attack is the judgement of the Sessions

Judge. It is urged that the judge could not under the law embody his summing up to the assessors in his judgement, that therefore the judgement was incomplete as containing no statement or discussion of the evidence and that on this ground the conviction cannot stand and that it should be set aside and a retrial ordered.

The objection in our opinion is purely technical and has no real substance. If the judge had made a copy of his summary and had included it in the judgement it is not disputed that there could be no legal objection to its being treated as a part of the judgement. Such a summary would indeed form a natural part of the judgement and though in it the facts and evidence are marshalled for the assistance of the assessors they are in reality the facts and evidence on which the determination of the case depended, the ultimate decision of which rested with the Sessions Judge.

In his judgement the judge records his findings on the facts and evidence as explained in his summary and though his method is inconvenient and not one of which we could approve for general adoption, we are unable to hold that it is illegal or that it vitiates the judgement so as to render it invalid.

The case has been tried with great care and fairness by the Sessions Judge and every assistance that was possible was given to the accused for his defence. It remains for us to determine whether there are to be found in this case any extenuating circumstances in favour of the accused which would, in law, justify us in reducing the extreme sentence which has been passed by the Sessions Judge and delaying with this question we are bound by the law and can only give effect to considerations which would in law justify us in interfering with the sentence. The learned pleader for the appellant in pleading on behalf of his client for mitigation of

the sentence has urged the following facts:

1. His youth, his age being about 19 years.
2. His confession to the District Magistrate, which shows that his feelings have not been fully developed and that the crime was a n insane act of criminal folly.
3. His attitude during the trial, which goes to support the inference that the accused is not a young man of a strong mind and that he was a mere tool in the hands of others.

The accused is not a mere youth but a young man who has attained the age fixed for the majority in this country. The crime was not committed at the instigation of an older man present in the spot. For 20 days the accused and his companion had been in Muzaffarpur watching for an opportunity to commit the crime, and when they thought the opportunity offered itself they carried it out with deliberation and determination after first taking precautions to avoid detection and secure escape. It is impossible to treat the accused as a young man who did not know fully well the serious nature of crime he was committing. The murder was deliberately planned and cruelly carried out under cover of the darkness by the accused and his companion, both being armed with pistols and having made careful preparations for their own safety and escape.

We can find in the case no extenuating circumstances which would in law justify our interference with the extreme sentence which has been passed on the accused by the Sessions Judge. We, therefore, confirm conviction and sentence and dismiss the appeal.

The early phase of Indian Independence Movement saw several revolutionaries who took up arms against the British. Khudiram Bose, perhaps the youngest revolutionary in the history of India's freedom movement, was one such worthy son of Mother India. Disillusioned with the British after the partition of Bengal, Khudiram Bose blazed the horizon of freedom struggle by his daring revolutionary activities. His bombing of the carriage of the British officer sent tremors of fear among the British authority. With a smile on his face, this eighteen year old revolutionary embraced the gallows and illuminated the way for hundreds of revolutionaries to follow. Events of the early phase of freedom struggle have been woven into a rich tapestry in this book which is bound to stir patriotic fervour in reader's heart.

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